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TASSO AND HIS TIMES

TORQUATO TASSO

ALESS. ALLORI. UFFIZI

TASSO
AND HIS TIMES

BY

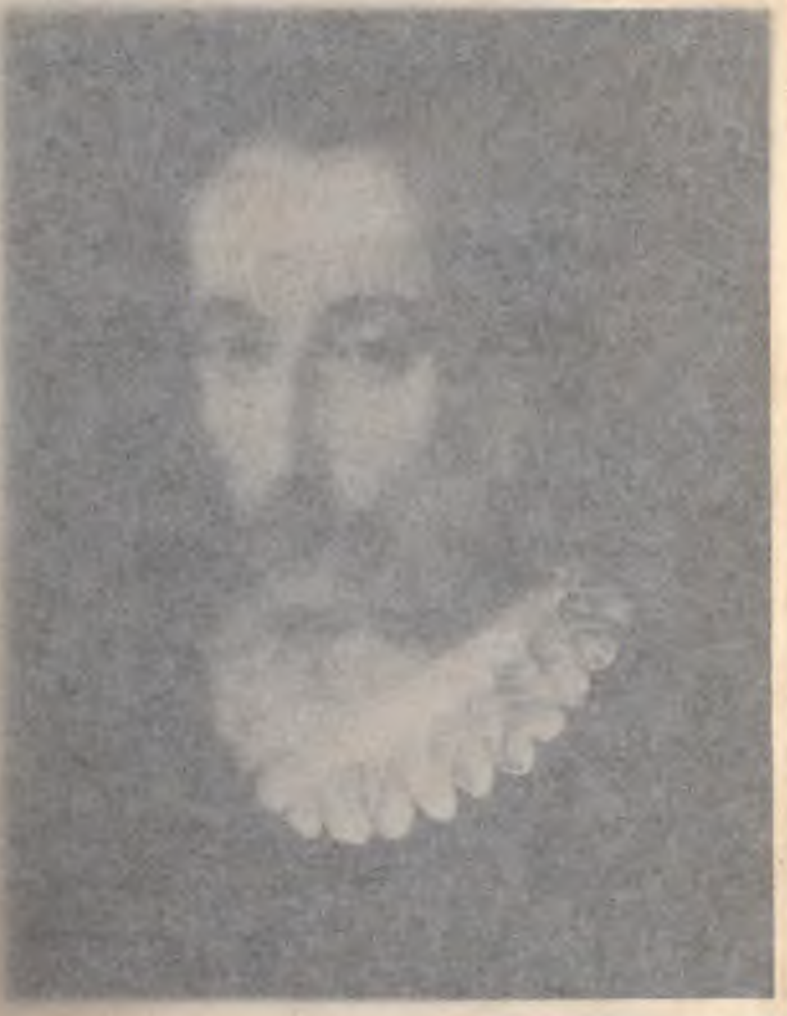
WILLIAM BOULTING

AUTHOR OF [illegible] "[illegible] ON THE ITALIAN REPUBLICS IN THE MIDDLE AGES"

155, 156

WITH TWENTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
LONDON: METHUEN & CO.
1907



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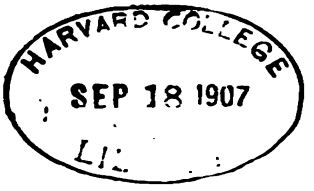

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TO

A., E. AND M.

IN MEMORY OF PLEASANT DAYS
SPENT TOGETHER IN A LAND WE LOVE

PREFACE

WE were four, who had met at Ferrara. For two of us the dull city was the Mecca of our pilgrimage; we were deep in the sad story of Tasso and the study of the century in which he lived. And there came two artists to our inn, of whom one was an amateur, a Harvard man, and the other was a professional painter, a cosmopolitan, Parisian bred. The latter was painting the quaint old colonnades of Via San Romano; the American was busy making many sketches; now trying to catch the sunbeams that play on the columns of Casa Romei, now dipping his brush in sepia to record the sombre shadows of Via Delle Votte.

"Why are you not content simply to enjoy?" asked the Harvard man one evening at *pranzo*. "I find the mere beauty of the land sufficient to fill my days. Why such harass, such futility of investigation? To me it would be but dull entertainment to ransack libraries for enigmatic fragments and revise the vain imaginations to which they have

given birth. For my part, I have long eschewed the subject, being of opinion that one gets nothing there but the 'lie circumstantial,' as Touchstone has it. For what is History, at best, but just that?" "Do you think there is more satisfaction to be found in living men, and truth more easily discoverable there?" asked I. "But by no means in woman," said the Parisian. "If I were painting an allegory, I should depart from convention. On my canvas 'La Vérité' would assuredly not be a female figure." "To my thinking," replied the American, "both sexes make themselves decent aprons and hold up in brave disguise. But if you *must* have naked verity, it is, I take it, to be found least perverted in fiction. For life is a trifle deceptive, and history, you must have discovered by now, a mere superstition—the meshes of an imposing cheat; while, if nothing but matter of fact will suffice you, a first-class novel is surely a nearer hit at Truth." "Yes," said the Frenchman, in his own quick and persuasive tongue, "to me also, as to most men, history is a quiet mortuary, wherein are garnered but faded memories and perished relics of the dead. The very tombs are in ruin."

And we smiled and did not reply. For had we not taken up our abode in those mournful vaults and been visited there by strange intimations? At first there had come to us beckonings to unaccustomed

secrets, and the faint mutterings of hollow voices were heard. But the voices gradually resolved themselves into living music and tones familiar as those of friends. Vague forms took shape and clothed themselves in the comeliness of flesh. We could hear their hearts beat time once again to vivid hopes and vain regrets and all the ironical fantasias of desire. We moved with them once more in the glow of a renewed daytime and breathèd the freshness of the morning air.

Alas! that, to be communicated at all to others, such vital vision must be transformed by a stubborn pen into the cold inadequacy of written words.

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TASSO AND HIS TIMES

CHAPTER I

BERNARDO TASSO

The Tassi—Career of a Courtly Scholar—Bernardo Tasso and Pietro Aretino—A Day at Court—Domestic Life—Birth of Torquato

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU justly remarks that the perfection of natural scenery is to be found where mountains sink down to the plain. This typical loveliness is possessed by the Bergamesque. At the head of its narrow valleys one sees, through the spray of cascades, snow-capped hills that just contrive to peer over forbidding, beetling crags. Lower down, torrents wind, hurtling, among tumbled mountains, for they have hollowed the hills, now in anger, now in mirth, into deep ravines. Then the streams escape into sunlight and pursue a more tranquil course through pleasant valleys until, finally, released by their Alpine warders, they move in mild and lazy mood through a carse of corn and fruitage that is guarded by the mountain barrier from every northern wind. Perched on a little hill and commanding alike these valleys and the plain lies the little city of Bergamo, surely the most picturesque of all the brown hill-towns of Italy. It is the capital of

the district, and, in the sixteenth century, it was the westernmost garrison of the Venetian Republic.

Here, for four centuries, the Tassi had been people of account. In the rough and tumble days of the twelfth century this family of Lombard descent held Almenno, a few miles from the city. Then we find them at Cornello, a hamlet in the sub-alpine valley of the Brembana, hard by Monte Tasso. Tasso means both badger (German *dachs*) and yew-tree in Italian, and opinion is divided as to whether Monte Tasso derived its name from the yews that clothed it or from the numerous badgers that were to be found in its neighbourhood. The Tassi used a badger, but sometimes a yew-tree, as their device. In the fourteenth century they became citizens of Bergamo.

In the old Roman days there was an excellent system of travelling by post. Whether any trace or tradition of this antique service remained we cannot tell. But in the thirteenth century Omodeo di Tassi del Cornello, who must have been a man of push and smartness, started a regular posting service. In no long time the badger-skin cap of the postilions of the Tassi were to be seen along all the ruts that passed for highroads, and a postilion's horn adorned Tassi heraldry. Branches of the family having charge of the lucrative business were to be found established along the routes from Rome to Vienna and from Flanders to Spain, but the stem of the family remained at Bergamo and sought and received patents of nobility from the Emperor Charles V., from Pope Paul III. and from the Republic of Venice.

In 1493 there was born at Venice a Tasso destined to be the father of a great poet, but himself to take no

COURT OF THE PALACE OF THE TASSI, BERGAMO

XVI CENTURY

inglorious rank in Italian letters. Bernardo Tasso had the misfortune to lose both his parents in early life, and his father's brother, the Bishop of Recanati, became his and his two sisters' guardian. But the bishop fell under the knives of assassins just when Bernardo was preparing to push his fortunes in the world. Bernardo studied at Padua, an ancient school of learning, supporting himself with difficulty on his share of a scanty patrimony, and knowing, belike, such hungry days as some of our own northern students know. But his career was a distinguished one, and he attracted the notice of Pietro Bembo, the most accomplished of scholars, the most elegant of courtiers, the most fastidious of critics, a man stirred by high and spiritual desires, tugged at by base allurements of sense. Bembo had just settled in Padua; he had been of the retinue of the late Pope Leo X., a retinue to which he had added almost as much lustre as to the court of his distant cousin, Caterina Cornaro, ex-Queen of Cyprus; for, of the many brilliant people who surrounded the Lady of Asolo, he was the most particular star.

Bernardo was handsome, well built, skilled in martial exercise and all those accomplishments which the princes of the North were wont to cross the Alps to acquire; an honourable, chivalrous gentleman after the standard of his time, a man of feeling, a scholar, and endowed by nature with vivid imagination. For such a man, especially if he were of good lineage, there was but one career open—that of court-service. Success, even in the ecclesiastical career that might have tempted a tamer spirit, depended on court favour in the early years of the sixteenth century.

The princely patronage of letters in Italy was no new thing. The petty despots that appeared in the republics had to maintain by craft and force what they procured by cunning or violence. The insecurity of sway was such that illegitimacy of birth was no bar to an illegitimately acquired throne; the most capable man in the ruling family seized power, or was even welcomed as the family representative; and Pope Pius II. informs us that, when he rode to Mantua, he was received by Gonzaga, the reigning duke, himself a bastard, accompanied by seven other bastards of his house. No wonder that new rulers, often princes of a passing hour, sharing in the universal enthusiasm for learning, surrounded themselves with distinguished men. Naturally they preferred intellectual society to the sports of barbarians; they needed all the intelligence they could muster to their defence; they replaced by lustre and renown what they lacked of lineage, title and established dignity. The very mercenary captains sought the best scholars they could employ as secretaries and ambassadors, and took them with them to the field; each prince sought to eclipse all others in the intellectual distinction as well as in the stateliness and splendour of his court. The tradition remained down to a time when Spanish domination was fully established and dry-rot affected the Italian spirit, when rulers strove to increase by exaggeration of rank what they had lost in exercise of power. It was in full force during Bernardo's youth.

There was still a market for ability in Italy. Princes and Feudatories and Great Captains vied with each other to secure and retain men of talent. Bernardo became secretary to Guido, of the famous house of Rangoni of

Modena, Captain of the Papal Forces in the North. At the age of twenty-nine he went to Paris when negotiations were on foot for the marriage of Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, with Renée, the daughter of Louis XII. of France, and on Renée becoming Duchess of Ferrara he was appointed as her secretary. The duties of such court-service were light, the retinue was engaged in elegant trifling, refined enjoyment, amateur theatricals, and the carrying into effect of spectacular displays that were devised by the combined genius of poets, artists and architects; the court often travelled, and was visited by the princes of other States with their dependants; it gave access to the society of all the wit, learning and beauty that Italy could boast; there was every opportunity afforded to talent to display itself, every enticement by way of honour and substantial reward; there was abundance of leisure for literary pursuits; wisdom and tact were sufficient for a man of parts to steer his way to high success. Bernardo began to bear what he describes as "that difficult, irksome, toilsome yoke of princely servitude". But neither he nor his son Torquato was ever really averse to the yoke against which they both inveigh. Their spirit was not as the spirit of Dante; their pride was not as his pride; it was lofty enough, but it lacked the nobility that found the patron's salt bitter, and his stairs hard to climb.

Bernardo had abundance of leisure hours, and he occupied them in the writing of verses. Italian is facile for verse-making; its liquid and melodious vocables invite, like limpid waters; but, as Lord Byron said, Italian is as a capricious beauty that bestows her smiles on all, but her favours on very few. To write Italian verse is easy: to

write Italian poetry is not easy. In this difficult task Bernardo was successful, and his fame began to spread.

In 1532 he was made secretary to Ferrante Sanseverino, Prince of Salerno, a quasi-independent feudatory of Spain. This appointment placed him in very easy circumstances, and enabled him to vary the leisure of court life by the excitement of the camp. For, in 1535, he accompanied Charles V. on his punitive expedition to Tunis. Bernardo brought back with him two precious oriental vases for perfume; later on, these impressed the young imagination of Torquato, and, later still, they became the theme of two beautiful sonnets. Bernardo was given a lien on the customs of Salerno, and was then sent on an important mission to Spain, where he spent two years (1537-39).

By now he had become one of the most distinguished men of letters. The Italians, above all Latin races, have always attached high value to the great creative gifts of men, and especially to the entire conveyance of the fine shades as well as the full force of thought in meet and felicitous words. So admirable a writer, himself of noble birth, commanded the friendship of princes and of most of the distinguished people of his time. And it was a brilliant time. For, in spite of the sore disasters that attend foreign invasion, in spite of the shrinkage in commerce and the progress of slow, internal decay, Italy still bore herself bravely in the world's eye. The spiritual ferment of the fifteenth century in art and letters had, indeed, almost spent itself; the Renascence had become materialised; but it disguised, in an investment of voluptuous splendour, what it had lost of inner light. In the earlier part of the sixteenth century Castiglione was busy

portraying the perfect gentleman; Machiavelli was laying the foundations of political science; Guicciardini was writing unsurpassable history; Ariosto was creating his fantastic world; every little city produced one or more novelists who aspired to rival Boccaccio, or could boast a Petrarchist of skilful numbers, or a Platonist of generous heart; Michelangelo Buonarotti, engineer, architect, sculptor, painter, poet, continued the tradition of those universal men that had been the wonder of the world; and the full glory of colour was being, for the first time, unveiled by the Venetians. Yet, to a discerning eye, the symptoms of decay were but too patent.

For, during the Renascence, intelligence was not plagued by scruple; its only care was to hold a short and precarious term of power by preserving a sharp and effective edge. Men called the self-assertiveness of strong, lawless personality *virtù*. Catholicism degenerated into fetishistic formality, and true worship was accorded to beauty and vitality alone. Even in the Dark Ages, great Pan was not really dead, but lingered hidden among the reeds: the wild songs of wandering scholars mingled strangely with the warning of the vesper-bell. Then there came a miracle greater than ever attached to any saint, for the dry bones of antiquity were disearthed, and they took on the warm beauty of life again, and bestowed it. Men forewent the chilly stars of a distant heaven, for the light of the past broke on them as the morning sun, inspiring them with new vigour and impassioned hope. The throbbings of desire were felt; the waters of the Renascence were all a-bubbling with voices as fresh as those of Nature itself; the fertilising fountains awoke

blossoms of delight that passed swiftly through the fulness of summer into over-ripeness and decay. The spirit of Man—Nature's "insurgent son"—sought freedom and joy and power; but tasteful elegance and perfect art proved no final haven; the lax soil of the Renascence bore noisome weeds no less than roses, and cruel winds came from the North over the mountains and shook and bared each shivering bough. The Church, to regain its power, imposed pietistic submission, and there was a threat that the dulness of tenebrous ages would reappear. But the world was really only in travail with new and deeper desires of the soul. Rome, with the ruthlessness of fear, prepared to bind the intellect in hopeless chains. She resolved to "suppress and uproot all errors, and to leave no vestige of them remaining"; she was about to decide that "there must be no toleration of any kind". The ruthless spirit and "thorough" policy of Caraffa prevailed, and the Italian character began to exhibit a northern vice, that special debasement of hypocrisy. Nor was this all. Half-barbarian warriors of the North rushed across the passes of the Alps, the sullen soldiery of Spain crossed the sea, and they fought together for the rich rule of Italy. Spain triumphed, and the potentates of Italy became the servants of Charles V., currying his favour and dreading his frown; for he held them as in a vice. Inconceivable economics, ruinous taxation, terrible misgovernment, luxurious waste, feudal prejudices, the establishment of primogeniture, and a vast increase in the number of non-productive monks and their costly houses were leading fast to mercantile and social ruin. An aristocracy, once composed of clever and instructed traders,

the peaceful invaders of every land, now copied the nobles of Spain and France; they became the hangers-on of petty courts; they despised honest work, and prided themselves on observance of ceremonious triflings and the exaggerated obsequiousness that attends on artificial rank. Their wealth was stolen vintage, wrung from the industry of tradesmen and patient tillers of the soil. Their servants no longer employed their wands on costly bales, but used them as staves of office to measure what distance should intervene in the order of precedence. Yet, even now, in spite of brigandage, the Italian peasant seemed happy to the traveller from the North, where thralls were as dull, as apathetic, and almost as animal as their own yoked oxen. He might still hear the Tuscan peasant trill sweet songs of unsurpassed purity and delicacy, unpremeditated lays that welled up in warm and generous breasts; he might still see the lads and maids gather at eventide at the village dance to the sound of flute and tabor.

The treachery and cruelty of the Renascence were so absolute and unconscious as to seem almost sublime. Its spirit degenerated towards an impudent and vulgar animalism. Among the many clever men whom Bernardo knew was Pietro Aretino, the literary blackmailer, declared "divine" by his own age, but since, with juster judgment, pronounced the most debased of all men of letters, because the least visited by any sense of shame. This "scourge of princes" was born of a harlot, whom he robbed, for Pietro of Arezzo was destined by the stars to be, from the cradle up, the sole architect of his own fortunes. He became, as his gossip Titian says, the

"condottiere of letters," the swashbuckler of a painted Muse. From the secure retreat of Venice (for Venice was the England of those days, the generous asylum for outcasts from other lands), he vomited forth obscene dialogues, satiric letters, turgid eulogies, sarcastic praises and virulent abuse. He was an arrant coward. When the English ambassador thrashed him he professed himself "glad to be given the opportunity of pardoning an affront". His life was one long gratification of every form of voracity; it was as profligate as his works; having more flesh than other men he must needs have more sin; he looked the world impudently in the face; he was in fact a Falstaff of the *Rinascimento*, a degenerate gentleman, a portentous and satiric simulacrum of his period, of all its insatiate appetites, its sensuous passion, its rich endowment, its grossness and its wit. He knew the weak point in every man's armour, and sent his rapier straight to the spot. By flattery and intimidation, by cajolery and abuse, he was made Cavalier of St. Peter by the Pope, and very nearly succeeded in obtaining a Cardinal's hat; he received tribute money from frightened princes, and even from Barbarossa the Corsair and the Great Soldan. Medals were struck in his honour; he kept open house for all the distinguished people of his time that brought him gems and statues and cloth of gold to wear; his doors stood not less widely open to destitute virtue; nor were needy scoundrels shut out. His criticism could be direct, penetrative and independent; he had a redeeming love for Nature, and he achieved the real esteem of such great men as Buonarotti and Titian—men a thousand times better than himself. He gave

PIETRO ARETINO

TITIAN. PITTI

Bernardo Tasso a taste of his quality. The letters of literati were usually intended for general consumption and handed about freely, at least by the author. Pietro wrote to Bernardo thus:—

"Thinking too highly of your own productions and too little of those of others, you exhibit the value of your judgment. In epistolary style you are but my copyist, and you follow me with naked feet. You can imitate neither my facility of phrase nor the splendour of my metaphors. They wither on your weary page; while on mine they appear full of life and vigour. I will admit that in hymns, odes and epithalamia, you have a certain merit, a certain angelic grace and heavenly harmony which are agreeable to the ear. But these sweetmeats are out of place in letter-writing: a letter should be direct and striking, not puny and artificial. Your faulty taste prefers flowery perfume to solid fruit. But do you not know who I am? Do you not know how many letters I have published that are truly marvels? I will not stop, however, to write my eulogy which, nonetheless, would be but the truth. I shall only say that men of judgment will regard my natal day as memorable: for I am one who, without court-seeking or court-service, have compelled all the powerful—dukes, princes and kings—to render tribute to my genius. My fame extends as far as the world stretches. My portrait is to be found in Persia and India, and there my name is honoured. To conclude, I salute you, and rest assured that many blame your style, but not through envy, and many praise it, out of compassion."

Bernardo Tasso was pre-eminently a courtier. Few

men had so great a knowledge of men and cities: few were better acquainted with their *vie intime*. Let us pay an imaginary visit with him to some petty princelet of the time.

The palace is a gem of architecture, but too small to hold many guests, so you are bestowed in some hospitable monastery or in lodgings. You leave your room betimes without breakfasting (for early breakfast is a meal unknown in Italy), and make your way to the palace. You cross the courtyard, where gaily caparisoned steeds are held in waiting by an army of grooms, and pass along corridors frescoed by masterpieces of Dosso Dossi or Francesco Cossa or Giulio Romano, or, perchance, by the hand of the great Titian. You enter the audience chamber; the ceiling is sky-coloured and filled with angels by the pupils of Raphael, or, perhaps, glowing with the fiery reds of Mazzolino; the walls, rich with arabesques in stucco, copy the decorations of those Baths of Titus that Papa Leo X. unearthed. You make your obeisance to the duke, and, in due time, take your allotted place in the cortège, with fair ladies at your side robed in cloth of silver and gold, and followed by falconers and pages leading greyhounds by the leash; while the dwarfs and jesters of the court stand at the great gates, and you pass out and ride along streets filled with an admiring crowd of ill-clad, ill-smelling citizens, out of whose honest labours all this frippery is wrung. And then you leave the city behind you and ride on more freely and with less ceremony of state, a joyous company, and the woods ring again to the merry sound of the horns. The quarry slain, you return hungry to a mid-day banquet, and after water has been poured over your

hands and you and all have eaten and drunk sparingly of the good wine, adding much water to it, the duke retires to a private chamber to lose a few hundred or a thousand ducats or so to a Cardinal at cards: he may find occasion perhaps to lose his temper also, and write thereafter to the Pope that the priest has cheated him.

Or, perhaps, we do not go a-hunting to-day, but make a water-party and float down the stream in rich gilded barges to some beautiful country villa, while soft water-music is played on pipe and cither, viol and rebec, lute and lyre. There you would take *colazione* and pass into the gardens, and gather roses and lilies to pelt the ladies, who dodge you behind the statues. And then you are rowed back; and the ladies retire to their "gabinetti eleganti," and summon the court poet, nothing loath, to read his verses in praise of love to them, while they sit at their tambour-frames, embroidering. Then you would betake yourself to your apartments and don the latest fashion from Spain—black silk hose, black doublet and cap of black velvet. And you arrange the black feather in your cap and adjust your frills daintily and put on your ruby ring, remembering that the duchess' dowry, those unique convenient pearls, have been redeemed from Moïse the Jew (who had all your own jewels in pledge no later than last month), and it behoves you to be no less finely adorned than befits so resplendent a court.

And so you take your place at *pranzo* below the dais. And perchance the English ambassador is here, paying a visit on his easy travel to Venice. He being a man more familiar with his straight two-edged sword of all work than with the fork, contrives to run both prongs

into his cheek, and leaves the table spluttering blood, and one hears strange sibilant sounds outside, which is the English tongue, wherein he curses all new-fangled notions and strange inventions that his forebears (God rest their souls!) knew not, nor may their descendants ever, since the Almighty gives us all fingers for honest use. And after *pranzo* we retire to the apartment of the duchess, a chamber hung with rich tapestry from Flanders, and we discuss whether we shall deal cards and play scartino or display our minds in witty questions and devices wherein we may give secret signals to be understood of one only. Meanwhile the choir-boys come in and sing us some sweet madrigal, and then we listen to the viol players, that received instruction from Giovan Maria, the Jew, to whom Pope Leo X. of pious memory gave a countship and a small town for his dulcet notes. But quartettes, whether vocal or instrumental, are for hirelings only. Your true courtier displays his lithe manly figure and mellow voice in solos only; verses that are composed to be sung by those who can convey to others the noble qualities of the soul. Next there is a call for Francesco Maria Molza, ever a welcome guest to courtly circles. His intrigues have excited the delight and admiration of Pietro Aretino himself, and he reads a lascivious story at which no dame of correctest life will blush, for our ears are become very tolerant. And Matteo Bandello is here, so great a man of letters, so highly esteemed, that the instruction of the Princess Lucrezia Gonzaga in *belles lettres* has been entrusted to him. This ecclesiastic carries the memory of Violante Borromeo and other loves in his bosom, and he reads us his latest story, wherein virtue is praised and

vice carefully condemned, yet seven washings in running water might hardly cleanse it. Now will "commence the most agreeable conversation in the world. And in every one's face you might see, most livelily painted, an air of cheerfulness and joy." For the ladies are all noble, refined in their intelligence, dainty in their address, and many are exquisitely fair. And they allow a sincere lover of the true Platonic mould such little liberties as soft pinches of the hand; nay, quite privately, even indulge him in the ecstasy of a kiss, for such are the interpreters of the soul, according to the doctrine we have all held since the days of Provençal song and the first institution of Courts of Love.

But listen! Pietro Bembo is going to speak. Pietro is indifferent in religion, but he is eager in literature; he is perhaps a trifle prurient in matter, but he is elegant in style: he will deliver an oration meet for his company. And so we listen to an eloquent discourse on friendship and Platonic love, and everybody falls under the charm of persuasive periods, sweet as the cadences of Cicero.

At such an evening, too, Gaspare Contarini may be present, and elect to open his generous mind. Then, gazing mildly into distant space, he unfolds noble Utopian dreams of reconciliation with the Protestants. Or some one on a mission from the court of Ferrara may tell us about the last performance at its theatre, and how Messer Lodovico Ariosto is adding his final correction to his great poem, before its publication in a complete form. And, meanwhile, your eye would wander, perhaps to some fair Attic shape, some triumph of ancient art, just dug up after a thousand years of burial, with the rich tone on it that

the long rest in quiet earth has bequeathed; or, later, you will examine some dainty miniature of the duchess, or be called upon to mark some divine creation of a great living artist, hardly yet dry from his brush; and then perhaps you will read your own canzona that you have made in honour of a dame of dazzling fairness and generous bestowals; and after it has been discussed and commented on with rare artistic insight, and the company prepares to depart, Bembo may honour you with an invitation to accompany him as far as his lodging, since your paths lie together. On your way, you stumble, perchance, over the prostrate form of some unhappy gentleman—his open eyes fixed starwards; some luckless youth who has died in a brawl contesting the light favours of the latest brown or fair beauty that has entered the service of Isabella Gonzaga. And then you part from Bembo at his doorway, and wonder whether the great Platonist has bestowed his fair mistress within, or if she stays with the children at home. And then you go on to your lodging, somewhat quickly, thinking of all that have scores against you, and thankful that you are provided with a gallant escort this time, at least, and hardly need fear mishap.

The preposterous importance that had been achieved by courts established false criteria of life, and these were reflected in literature. The character and self-respect of men of letters were speedily affected. In half a century Chiabrera prides himself that the most noble Duke of Mantua graciously allowed him to keep on his hat in the ducal presence, and that the Duke of Savoy placed a coach at his disposal, though he did not ask him to dine. Almost half of Chiabrera's short autobiography is taken up

with an account, related with smug satisfaction, of the princely favours he has received. Poets fawned more than ever on princes, but there was soon a dwindling of competition among princes for the possession of poets.

For several years Bernardo received the favours of a Prince: his means were affluent, his position as a man of letters assured. He had seen much of the world; the excitement of camps had become familiar to him; of the magnificence, the malice and the tedium of the courts no man could speak with more authority. He was now forty-three; he had arrived at an age when men of experience are more than ever susceptible to the dart of the love-god when he hides behind youth and innocence; they are still capable of indulging in fresh hopes and new illusions; they profess anxiety to repair neglected duties and sigh for quiet domestic pleasures and the smiling greetings of wife and babes. In 1536 he arranged a marriage with Porzia de' Rossi, a young lady descended from the Tuscan house of Gambacorti. She was young, good-looking, and appears to have had a singularly sweet and submissive disposition. The couple took up their abode at Sorrento, at the western extremity of the Bay of Naples, a place visited by soft refreshing breezes, and where one may sit in the shadow of umbrella pines and look over the *piano*, with its rich growth of orange and pomegranate and euphorbia and cytizus, to the shimmering sea and the white cliffs of Capri. A son, who, however, soon ceased to breathe, and a girl were born to the pair; and Bernardo tells us that he is happy "with the sweetest wife and the dearest little daughter, whom it has pleased the Lord to bestow on me for the amusement of

that old age that is now drawing so near". But it does not fall to mortals to have any lengthened time of unruffled peace or unclouded joy. Bernardo soon began to be plagued with the silly tattle of the Rossi, the weary commonplace that passes for conversation; the dowry, too, remained unpaid, and there was an open rupture with the wife's brothers in consequence. But these were trivial vexations that he could forget in the society of Porzia and the little Cornelia, or in the seclusion of his study, where he threw his whole heart into the work that was to be his *opus magnum*, the "Amidigi". All that was affectionate, pious and noble was awakened in Bernardo by the obligations of domestic duty, and the fulfilment of duty was to be almost his sole felicity in the future, for he was doomed to carry a bleeding heart through weary years of exile. For suffering was to come that might be a test to the strongest nature.

He writes to his unmarried sister, a nun at Bergamo: "Porzia is six months with child. It will be cradled in the fear of the Lord, and whether boy or girl, as may please Him, to me it will be equally dear. Pray with your reverend sisters that the mother's life may be spared, for my happiness on earth is bound up in her." But before Porzia was brought to bed, Bernardo was summoned by his Prince to accompany him to Flanders; for France was making her last, desperate effort to dislodge Spain from Italy. Judge of Bernardo's anxiety; and imagine his joy when news reached him of the birth of a son and the safety of his beloved Porzia. Torquato Tasso was born A.D. 1544, and was ten months old before his father could bend over his cradle and give him his blessing.

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD OF TORQUATO

Earliest Years—The Prince of Salerno—Exile—The Jesuits—Death of Porzia Tasso—Rome—Michelangelo—The Court at Urbino

SORRENTO, the birthplace of Torquato, is one of the most charming spots in a region "where Nature rejoices in her splendour and smiles at her own beauty". All his earliest years were spent in the warm impassioned South—so meet an atmosphere for the nurture of his specific temperament; for, as Manso says, it is "a garden, planned by Nature in her cunningest mood and perfected by art; and there the mind as well as the senses may take delight".

Bernardo enjoyed the first smiles of his little son, but, before he could listen to his infant prattle, he was again called away on his Prince's service. It irked him to be away from home. "There is no greater delight to me," he writes, "than to find myself in my own house with my wife and children. Household worries are not so serious, nor is my Porzia so designing and hard to manage as to make me wish to be away. My yoke is one of love and fidelity, and so light that I do not feel it." Soon after his return from his duties it became necessary for him to dwell near the Prince, and so the little family came to Salerno.

Bernardo furnished his new abode handsomely; he hung its walls with tapestries that he had picked up in Flanders, and pleased Porzia with all kinds of northern knick-knacks that he had brought with him. He was already held in great repute for the imagery and smoothness of his lyrics—qualities, both of them, which he transmitted, intensified, to his greater son. He was interested in fisher-folk also, and wrote poetical descriptions of their lives; so striking out a quite novel course in letters. Two whole perfect years followed the removal to Salerno; years of domestic joys. The silence of the study was relieved by the prattle of the two children and the companionship of his gentle Porzia. The atmosphere of the household was one of quiet and blameless domesticity.

Suddenly there arose more serious matters for Bernardo to attend to than humdrum secretarial duties. Don Pedro de Toledo, the Viceroy, by whose name the Neapolitans still designate their principal street, tried to introduce the Inquisition. There was already bad blood between the populace and the Spanish garrison; and the Government held a monopoly in corn, whereby the poor found themselves compelled, in years of plenty, to eat bread of inferior quality to what they had been obliged to put up with in years of scarcity. Deputies were sent to the Viceroy to protest against the Inquisition: they were not heard. Then there were sullen mutterings and restlessness that might presage a sudden storm. The Viceroy fumed and declared the city to be in a state of revolt. The people decided to appeal to the Emperor, and requested the Prince of Salerno to act as one of their representatives. Sanseverino sought the advice of his two

most trusted counsellors, Vincenzo Martelli and Bernardo Tasso. Martelli was a cautious, cool-headed, practical-minded Florentine. He was for non-interference. Bernardo was higher minded and far less astute: he urged the more generous and disinterested course. He pleaded the justice of the appeal, and that Sanseverino owed it to his country and to himself to consent to act, since benevolence and self-devotion befit a Prince. The Viceroy, getting alarmed, begged Sanseverino not to accede, promising to procure the revocation of the edict. But the people misdoubted his sincerity, and Sanseverino determined to go to the Imperial Court. He was ill received, and, indeed, got audience of Charles V. with difficulty. He summoned Bernardo to his side, and they were kept waiting at Nuremberg, and then had to follow the Imperial heels for a whole year. During this time Porzia received many letters from her husband, full of good, practical sense and expressions of a husband's and father's forethought and affection. He threw himself heart and soul into the Neapolitan question, and at last, after a whole year, Sanseverino and he succeeded in getting an amnesty, and even sundry boons for Naples. On their return the grateful city received them with much demonstration, and their progress through it was a sort of triumph. But Toledo felt humiliated; though he pocketed the affront done to his Spanish pride, he nonetheless nourished his malice and bided his time for revenge.

Bernardo returned to Salerno and entrusted the instruction of Torquato in the rudiments of letters and the humanities to "an old priest, a worthy man," one Don

Angeluzzo, of whom the pupil always bore affectionate remembrance. One memorable day the kindly old priest took him up into the mountains to the famous Benedictine Monastery of La Cava, where the monks sat with them, recounting their legends and talking with Angeluzzo of ancient days—of crusaders and their perils by sea and land, of adventures in Palestine, and of the tomb of Christ. It was thus perhaps that the listening boy received a germ destined to grow and bear fruitage after many years in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Then he went up to the convent roof and drank in a never-to-be-forgotten view. Below lay a wild fantastic valley, with glimpses of woods and purple peaks and the distant blue of the sea. And in the library were preserved with pious care records of alien things and mighty news from buried centuries, parchments in Lombard characters, Greek diplomas of King Roger, and a Bible, widely differing from the Vulgate, and ascribed to very early days.

Salerno itself could not be without influence on the little lad, heedful and intelligent beyond his years. He would know every stone of the noble aqueduct; he would be taken along the quiet courts of the strange cathedral, wherein repose, in silence, Hildebrand, the fearless Pope, and men and women of great destinies. He would be taken to the crypt, dark, solemn and mysterious, wherein, it is said, the bones of St. Matthew himself are laid. He would often look up to the long protecting line of graceful hills and the crumbling Norman keep that, a thousand feet above, held enduring guard. And Salerno is the warder of a beautiful coast, where the monotony of lemon and orange and citron groves is

ABBEY OF LA CAVA

broken by picturesque crags of white limestone and deep, cool chasms wherein villages are hidden, each with its gardens of date-trees and the Indian fig. He could gaze from the hill-tops over the sea to where distant Doric temples stand out from the plain, their calm outline unbroken by the injuries of two thousand years, though the little town that the Greeks consecrated to the sea-god was quite deserted by now, and the silence unviolated save by some ghostly echo of the neighbouring sea.

Life was peaceful to the Tassi, but the calm preceded storm. One day the Prince of Salerno was out riding. Suddenly his horse reared, he felt a sharp pain in the knee and heard the report of an arquebus. A man was found hiding in some brushwood, and was carried off to gaol. The prisoner wrote to the Viceroy from his cell and Sanseverino's suspicions were aroused. He discovered that Toledo's son felt his Spanish sense of honour wounded by the political discomfiture of his father, and, burning to vindicate it, he had hired the culprit. For centralised authority was still imperfectly established, and the curtailment of high-handed power by law encouraged secret vengeance throughout Italy. Old social rights and privileges survived new conventions, and a curious mingling of careful obediences and law-defying passions marked the transformation of the mediæval into the modern world. The Viceroy affected sympathy with the Prince; he assured him that signal justice should be done; and meanwhile he wrote to the Emperor that the affair was all about a woman. The Prince had good reason to believe that there were intriguers at work at the Imperial Court. He

was already half-inclined to go over to the French side, though he met with strong opposition from Bernardo Tasso. Directly he recovered sufficiently to travel he set off for Innsbruck, where Charles was staying, but his wound either impeded his journey or he affected that it did so, and he halted a long time at Padua, whence he sent on messengers to Charles. The messengers were ill received. The Emperor required Sanseverino to appear before him without delay; yet when asked if he would pledge his Imperial word that the Prince might come in all safety, he replied: "I do not pledge my word. If he choose to come he may do so; if matters are not as they look." Now many Neapolitan exiles had taken shelter at Padua, which was in Venetian territory, and they had certainly lost no opportunity of working on Sanseverino. On receiving the message he declared for the French side, and Toledo at once proclaimed him rebel and his fee forfeit to the State.

Such a decree included his followers. Bernardo Tasso, that had had so great a hand in the events which brought about this catastrophe, was too loyal and honourable a man to desert the Prince. He left his family behind him and joined Sanseverino in France. Porzia and the children were removed to Naples, where they dwelt in the Palazzo Gambacorti. Bernardo nourished strong hopes for the future, nor were these entirely without warrant, for an indecisive warfare was still being waged on the French borders, and Henry II. had promised Sanseverino the Viceroyalty of Naples in the event of ultimate success. But the fine commodious palace at Salerno had gone, and 900 scudi a year, derived from various offices and gabelles.

Bernardo had spent 1,200 ducats on new furniture, and this was all that remained to Porzia, besides such interest on her dowry as her brothers chose to pay; for they still held on to the principal; moreover, they had wronged their sister and her husband, and, therefore, bore them no goodwill.

Torquato, now seven years of age, was sent to a school, quite close to the new home, that was conducted by the new Company of Jesus. The Jesuits were busy laying themselves out for the support of the influential classes. Like all religious organisations that have been permanently successful, they copied military models, thus bringing their power to an effective point, preserving their order from dissension, and delaying, perhaps, the inward and secret infection that all institutions bear. The Jesuits were a cohort of "men-at-arms, devoted body and soul to the Lord Jesus Christ and His true and lawful vicar on earth". Ignatius Loyola, himself a knight, knew that there are men, and even whole peoples, whose chief happiness lies in obedience and submission; he knew that a militant body appeals to the combative instincts. His genius perceived a new road to success. Unlike all other orders, the Society of Jesus mingled with the world, dealing warily with its corruptions and most circumspectly with its sins. The members made themselves all things to all men, and, passing over much in silence, angled for the direction of souls. The brethren were carefully selected and severely disciplined. The society speedily became a powerful engine capable of crushing a Cyclops or cracking a nut. It compelled the policy of empires and co-operated with the institutions of the Inquisition and the

Index to bind the human mind in chains. For Jesuits specially laid themselves out to capture the youth of the upper classes; they wished to penetrate society with sanctity through ensamples of learning and rank. They cared little for pedantic scholarship, much for general culture and address; they improved the existing method of education, shortened the routes to knowledge, and made instruction attractive to youth. Jesuitic training became fashionable; the higher education passed into Jesuit hands. The fathers had recently built a small chapel at Naples, and to the school that adjoined it Torquato was sent.

He loved his school. Before it was daylight, even, he was mad to begin his studies, and on dark mornings he was conducted to his master by a servant bearing a lighted torch. Nothing could have been worse for him. Possibly he owed his short-sight to pouring over his books in these early years; certainly such assiduity to letters was not healthful for the developing nervous system of a little lad of seven. It is questionable whether the Jesuits had evolved at this time their pernicious system of making neophytes of their order meditate on sacred subjects until they positively saw the blood flow from the crown of thorns and the sweat start in the last agony—a system which reflected itself in all their teaching; but there can be little doubt that the impressionable mind of the little Tasso received undue religious stimulation at their hands. Let us hear his own words: "Through the discipline of the Jesuit fathers, I received the sacrament when I was but nine years of age, though so tall and forward was I that I might have been taken for twelve. And when I

communicated, I had not yet realised that the Host was the veritable Body of Christ. Nevertheless, I was moved by I know not what kind of devotion, so inscrutable was it, that the solemnity and devout character of the place, the observance, the subdued undertone and the crossing of themselves by the worshippers produced. I received the Body of Christ with great fervour and felt within me indescribable peace."

Porzia and the children remained nearly two years in the Palazzo Gambacorti, and during this time hopes, once so flattering, faded gradually away. Bernardo was dependent on a Prince of broken fortunes, and the relations of master and servant with one another were not of the happiest, for discomfort and uncertainty rendered them both irritable. Porzia had constant anxiety about her husband, so far away; the children that were her chief care were her only comfort. She longed to be with Bernardo. "I would be with you, even were it in hell," she wrote. "Think," says Bernardo to a friend, "think in what straits the unhappy girl must find herself, without means, friends or relations." He sought and obtained permission to go to Rome, hoping that Porzia would join him, but her brothers objected, threatening to keep the dowry, both principal and interest. Bernardo's indignation was unbounded. "Her brothers are no brothers, but deadly foes"—it is thus he unburdens himself—"they are cruel beasts rather than men; her mother is no mother, but a fell enemy, no woman, but a fury from hell." He succeeded in getting a licence from Caraffa, then Archbishop of Naples, for Porzia and Cornelia (whom her father describes as a child of great beauty) to be taken

care of in a well-ordered convent; but he could not find a monastic asylum sufficiently strictly regulated for Torquato, so he decided that the boy should come on to him at Rome. He hoped that some happier day the mother and daughter might be allowed to leave the kingdom and come on to him. Porzia's brothers took the valuable furniture at Naples and everything that belonged to her, even to wearing apparel. It was a sad parting between mother and son. Tasso never forgot it. Years after he wrote: "When I was but a child a cruel fate tore me from my mother's bosom. Ah! I remember her kisses, wet with sad tears, her sobs and fervent prayers—only uttered to be borne away by the evasive air; how I could not press my cheek to hers too close, while she strained me to her heart as if she never could let me go."

Torquato never saw his mother again. Two years later there came, one winter's day (February, 1556), a letter from Naples that was not in Porzia's handwriting. It contained the news that she was dead; her illness had come on suddenly and it lasted less than two days. Bernardo, in his grief, did not hesitate to suspect the brothers of foul play. His letters give evidence of a mind overwhelmed with anguish. He wrote to his sister, Afra, the nun at Bergamo: "I know that the greater my love the less should be my grief at her loss, since death is the escape from that ocean of evils that perpetually overwhelmed her and of which I was the cause. What earthly prospects are there that we should desire her to live? Alas, none. . . . Endowed with a fine intelligence, with a prudence even greater than her virtue and charm, she remained through my banishment in a kind of widow-

hood, without kin, or rather say with relatives worse than strangers, in adversity, and no friends to aid her with their counsels; so that her life was one of perpetual anxiety and alarm. She was young, she was beautiful, she was so jealous of her honour, that since my exile she often wished she could find herself old and ill-favoured. She loved our son Torquato and me so much that, obliged to dwell far away from us, hopeless of our ever being together in happy ease again, her heart, like the heart of Tityus that vultures devoured, suffered cruel pain." He announced his bereavement to a friend thus: "Fate, not content with my past misfortunes, but to complete my misery, has just taken from me my sweet young wife; and thus, by her death, deprived me of every hope of happiness, every prospect of consolation that yet remained for my declining years, and my poor children of their one stay. I weep, night and day, and I accuse myself of being the cause of her death, for, out of ambition or too great an attachment to my Prince, I abandoned her, my children, and all domestic control into the hands, let us not say of brothers but of her cruellest foes. But God has chosen to punish me through her, and to embitter those days that remain to me—and they cannot be many. I repine most at the suddenness of the end, for she was ill thirty-six hours only, and, as I conclude, the cause was either poison or a broken heart. I lament the fate of my daughter who, unhappily for herself, still lives, young, unguided, in the hands of her enemies, with no other friend than her unhappy father, and he in poverty and spurned by fortune, aged and far away from her. . . . I am doing all I can to snatch the poor girl from the hands of her

foes, lest that should happen to her which has befallen her unhappy mother, who, I hold it as incontestible, was poisoned by her brothers for the sake of the dowry."

It is true that all cases of mysterious or unexpected death were then attributed to poison. Even to-day the peasants of Southern Italy are wont to do so. In the sixteenth century the theory of death by poisoning was a ready harbour of refuge for medical practitioners innocent of pathology and incompetent at diagnosis. But the general suspicion was based on a lamentable fact: death by design was appallingly common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In the political world assassination was frequently resorted to; heavy sums were privily offered, even by the Venetian Senate, for the secret removal of inconvenient foes. Examples thus set in high places were copied, and Bernardo was the more justified in his suspicions that Caraffa, the former Archbishop of Naples, now sat on the Papal throne surrounded by a brilliant court of Neapolitan nobles, and, out of the hatred he bore to Spain, might be expected to support Bernardo.

The prolonged absences of his father, the tears of his mother, the straitened circumstances and this sudden death were not healthy influences for a sensitive lad, and there was a great deal too much educational pressure put upon him. Bernardo was proud of Torquato's talents and ambitious as to his future. He forced him on and took scudi from a slender purse to pay for special lessons in Greek. But a cousin came to Rome from Bergamo to share in Torquato's studies. No bookworm was this lad, but full of fun and a thorough boy. Nothing could have been luckier: the cousin was a healthy anti-

dote to overmuch study. "Do not worry," wrote Bernardo to this lad's father, "do not worry that Signora Porzia has not yet arrived, for I have engaged a good woman to look after the boys and an old priest who has served me for seventeen years. He is a man, withal; he has no cure of souls and will devote himself entirely to the lads. Above everything they will have the best teacher in Italy, learned, skilled in both Latin and Greek, up-to-date in his method of education, a gentleman to the backbone, and not a bit of a pedant." It was no small thing for Bernardo to squeeze out the cost of so good an education from the paltry 300 scudi a year that Sanseverino contrived to allow him, and that were his sole means of support. For on the death of Porzia all the household goods were seized, and the uncles, in order to retain the dowry, that, with interest, amounted to several thousand scudi, got Torquato proclaimed a rebel on the ground that he had gone to join his father. Bernardo was well-nigh frantic that his other child, his beloved Cornelia, still remained in the power of such evil guardians (she was shut up in the house of one of the Rossi); he moved heaven and earth to set her free but without avail. Torquato, now a lad of twelve, wrote a futile letter on his own account to Vittoria Colonna (not Michelangelo's friend, but another Vittoria, the wife of Don Garcia de Toledo, Viceroy of Sicily), a lady famed for her goodness of heart and the services she was wont to render to men of letters. He begged her to use her influence on his father's behalf.

No man could have been more heedful of the boys than was Bernardo: he watched over them almost with a

woman's care. While Porzia was alive he wrote her such news concerning Torquato as he knew a mother would most desire to have. "I am anxious that the children should not go into the vineyard; they overheat themselves and this summer the air there is unsafe; but, to give them a change, I have taken means to get the use of the vineyard of Boccaccio, and the Duke of Paliano has lent it us: we have stayed a week already in this good air and shall remain here through the summer." It is pleasant to think of Tasso, before the sad news came from Naples, playing with his cousin in the evening among the vines, or gazing from the slopes of the vineyard over Rome. He was old enough, and his mind was sufficiently prepared, to hear her deep voice call to him, to be visited by persuasive visions of her perished peoples, and feel the fascination of her immortality.

So young a lad, busy with his lessons, would see little of the great folk to whom his father paid court or the scholars and poets with whom he associated. The poverty of Bernardo's establishment would forbid much social intercourse at home. Yet something of the atmosphere of Roman society, to which the father had free access, something of its life and tone must have reached the son. Rome was not, indeed, what she had been. In the great years from Nicholas V. to Clement VII. she had attracted the most brilliant genius, the profoundest learning to herself; the Vatican was, for a short period, the focus of art, the soul of Italy. But Rome had not recovered from the terrible sack of 1527. The Romans themselves were not a gifted people, and the Popes had sterner duties before them now than the advancement of letters or the

encouragement of fine arts: they were busy dealing with heretical lapses, Protestant secessions, and ancient pollutions; they were preoccupied with ecclesiastical politics and the difficult and delicate tasks of manipulating France and Spain and of preserving their own temporal sway and spiritual independence. The golden age had departed; there remained of the creators of that vivid splendour but one old man, broken in body and sore of soul. Torquato must have heard much of Michelangelo Buonarotti; he may have seen him. Michelangelo was now very old. The course of his life was an epitome of the change that had come over the Italian spirit; it reflected what was of best in a profound transformation. In his lofty manhood inextinguishable desires, the vast soarings of the Renascence were concentrated into fierce attempts to express in outward form the inner struggles and contemplations of the soul. In his old age fresh springs of feeling arose, he was borne along deep currents of meditation, alien to his youth. His long career had stretched from the large free days of the Renascence, through the oppressive gloom of foreign enslavement to the abridgments of Catholic reaction. It was he who gave the plastic arts the crown of their achievement, and now they were become hollow echoes of themselves. He had lived under eleven popes; he was destined to outlive two more, but no Pisgah-vision was to be granted to him—he did not live long enough by a single year to hear new, severe music ascend to heaven from the great spaces he had designed. In his youth he had witnessed, if he did not share in, the corybantic revels of Lorenzo de' Medici, when the Magnificent and his companions danced through the streets of Florence singing

audacious songs; he had fought with Titanic energy in the last vain strain for freedom of his native city. He had been familiar with the pageantry of masquerading popes, had criticised the gay garments of their acknowledged sons, and admired the beauty of Julia Farnese and the Spanish women of Alexander VI. as they were borne in their litters to the Vatican. Now he saw the priests of new orders thronging to visit the sick at San Girolamo, lay brothers hastening to evening meetings where they read the Martyrology, or heretical wretches hurried off to prison or the executioner along these same Roman streets. The joyous sculptor of vine-crowned Bacchus, the rare delineator of the grace of Antinous and the love of Leda, came to grave and contemplative thoughts, and was filled with noble grief; he consecrated the genius of his ripest years in depicting the Day of Wrath and the great dread that shall consume the naked soul before the judgment-seat of God.

The new Pope, Caraffa, was bent on freeing himself from Spanish thraldom. The terrible Alva, now Viceroy of Naples, advanced into the Campagna, and Bernardo thought it well to send his son off to his relatives in Bergamo for safety, while he himself sought protection of Guidobaldo II., Duke of Urbino, a brother poet, and a great patron of letters and the arts. Torquato enjoyed the freshness of the little hill-town after the sultry air and confinement of the great city. There was much to interest him—there were ramparts and the castello that had withstood many a siege, the ancient churches with their added chapels, gems of the Renascence, green mountain slopes, and the vast plain that stretched beneath the city and the

Alps, its vineyards and fields of bright blue flax; there was the working of the iron-mines to watch, and the rough dialect of the peasantry to listen to. It is refreshing to find that his relatives found the boy grow troublesome. But that he was a lad of promise is shown by the fact that he was taken notice of by Girolamo Albano, the Collateral of the Venetian Republic, and that he became intimate with his learned young secretary, Maurizio Cataneo, thus laying the foundation of friendships that endured through life.

Before long Torquato was summoned by his father to join him at Pesaro, where he was staying with Guidobaldo, for the Duke always took his court thither in the winter season to escape the cold of Urbino. The country is beautiful; the climate is gentle, for Pesaro is sheltered by the Apennines and borders on the sea. There were two palaces, one old and stern, but with added decorations in the simple graceful style of the early Renascence; the other, more modern and sumptuous, with open corridors and a loggia supported by columns of the choicest marble. Torquato would approach these palaces through woods of lofty oak, and meadows never lacking beautiful flowers, with vine-clad ascents above him and glimpses of high distant hills. Close by the castle were gardens of orange-trees, guarded by cedars, and one could look down on Pesaro and its little vessels and the tremor of the waves, and along the narrow plain that lies parallel to the sea, towards Ravenna and Venice to the north, while southwards a keener eye than Torquato's could discern Rimini and even Loreto, forty miles away. The lad was to dwell with his father in a place built to re-

semble a Roman ruin, a pleasant lodging for study and quiet hours. He would soon be introduced to Guidobaldo and his wife, Vittoria Farnese—the Duke a man of forty-three, of robust habit, but gouty, beneficent to artists and men of letters, but hard to his people; the Duchess, a learned lady, very generous, very circumspect, and positively beloved by her husband. The Duke took a great fancy to the graceful, handsome lad of thirteen. He said he must be a companion to his own son, Francesco Maria, a little lad of eight. The two boys were set to learn their lessons together. Bernardo might indeed esteem his son fortunate. Guidobaldo's court was perhaps the most polished in Italy; it was certainly the best school for the perfect courtier. The Duke and Duchess delighted in instrumental music; there was excellent singing to be heard; conversation was sprightly and polished, and was cultivated as an art. Torquato and the young prince would learn horsemanship and the care of horses, the use of arms and how to bear themselves in joust and tourney, the tricks of fence and the minutiæ of honour. He was instructed in music and letters, and dwelt in an atmosphere where every one was a connoisseur in art. Nor were severer studies neglected: he read mathematics, and his instructor was of the opinion, so dear to our own Cambridge dons, that "conquering its severe difficulties rendered all other studies trivial". And, when the day's work was over and the sun dropped behind the Apennines, the young boy, full of poetic feeling, would become aware of their silence and concealment, their bare, silent summits and foldings that hint at mysterious valleys, hills that breathe valedictions from far-off ages, that are

DUCAL PALACE, URBINO

haunted by ghost-like echoes of alien armies and rest unperturbed by the fadings of change.

In summer Pesaro was less agreeable. The heat became great, and the court was wont to ride to Urbino, a little city of no great attractions, perched on a mountain spur, the apex of abrupt ascents and environed by the bald amplitude of the Apennines. The cortège would ride to the palace through crooked streets and narrow, cut-throat lanes, now so quiet and forlorn, but then astir with all the busy life of an important centre. Torquato would hear the "viva" of artisans who had left their pottery and benches to see the quality pass, honest men, deft of finger and brain, and skilled in the secrets of lustre-colours and the transparent glazing of majolica. Passing through the courtyard he would feast his eye on a small but beautiful palace, which was regarded by everybody as the very cynosure of architecture, and, entering, would find himself lost in admiration at painted ceilings and walls rich with intarsia; he would revel in the priceless library and all the opulent outpourings of the Renascence. But he was lodged not at the palace, but at a monastery hard by, and there he had an attack of influenza—a small matter in those days when periodic visitations of plague swept away tens of thousands. A letter of Bernardo's is painfully reminiscent of our own recent sufferings. He writes thus to a friend: "To-day, when I meant to come, my Torquato is seized by the same malady, and will assuredly suffer for four or five days, like all the rest, not in this monastery alone, but throughout the city. . . . The fever is already abating, and the catarrh has taken its course by the nose, very abundantly, and so severely that

the organ is inflamed. I have not thought it necessary to call in a doctor, but trust that he will get well, as all the rest have done, since we know what is the matter and all about diet and management." The epidemic appeared in Sicily and swept northward over the whole peninsula.

On the whole, father and son passed their lives very pleasantly at Guidobaldo's court. Bernardo was engaged in polishing his *opus magnum;* Torquato was pursuing his studies with enthusiasm. He was now thirteen, and the good Duke was anxious to improve his fortunes by marrying him to an heiress; but his father, who was in many respects a man of common-sense and good judgment, thought him too young, and that he would do better to pursue his studies.

Another epistle came from the Kingdom: it announced the approaching marriage of Cornelia with one Marzio Sersale, a gentleman of Sorrento, but somewhat out-at-elbows. Dowries in Sorrento did not run high, so that the motive of the uncles in arranging this marriage did not lie very deep below the surface. Bernardo was full of impotent wrath, and even discharged it on Cornelia. This was natural, perhaps, but it was without reason. Girls of the upper classes in the sixteenth century did as they were bid, and accepted their husbands at the command of their natural guardians as unquestioningly as they had received life from the hands of Nature herself.

Soon still worse news came. In June, 1558, a fleet of buccaneering Turks came sailing up to Sorrento by night. The inhabitants were fast asleep, and the pirates succeeded in landing without causing alarm. Christian renegades among them, who knew the country, stole up the passes

and held them, in order to catch fugitives, while the main body of ruffians rushed into the city and captured it. There was the usual carnage and sack, and then the corsairs sailed away again with many captives on board, destined for the slave-market. Cornelia had only been married a few days, and it was feared that she had been slain or carried off a prisoner in some Turkish hold. Bernardo and Torquato were in despair. "Think," wrote the former, "how anxiety, like the fang of a serpent, pierces my soul. I had rather hear she is dead, for, if living, beautiful as she is, her fate will be worse than death." His remorse at having been wroth with her was great. But presently good news came. Cornelia and her husband had succeeded in escaping from the city: mistaking the road in the darkness they avoided the trap set for fugitives. They were told in the morning that they were in the territory of the Marquis of Pescara; for they had not known whither they were fleeing. So great was the relief to Bernardo's mind that we learn from another poet that he, "in company with Messer Bernardo Capello, Messer Girolamo Muzio, Messer Antonio Gallo, and others beside, not otherwise than as milk-white swans, sang in sweet emulation to honour the great beauty and still greater virtue of their illustrious lady". Thus, in a nest of singing birds our impressionable Torquato passed the transitional years between the child and the man.

CHAPTER III

VENICE

Life at Venice—Weddings, Funerals and Fêtes—Painters and Architects —A Sixteenth-century Johnson

EVEN in his most embarrassed days the Prince of Salerno had allowed his quondam secretary a small pension, but now he ceased to send it. There was a certain lack of the pagan virtue of self-reliance in Bernardo; there was a certain tendency to querulous complaint. He set a bad example to Torquato thereby, for the boy inherited this unhappy temperament. Bernardo complained bitterly of Sanseverino, whom he considered oblivious of just claims and regardless of sacrifice made on his behalf. The Court of France, too, disappointed him. His naturally pious tendency inclined him to an ecclesiastical career, and he had hoped to be presented with a French benefice. Though he had dedicated his "Amidigi" to Francis, neither that king nor his sister Marguerite, though she favoured other poets with the most liberal gifts, took any notice of his appeals. He now altered his dedication. It was no longer addressed to His Most Christian Majesty, but to His Most Catholic. He revised the poem to tickle Spanish ears and gratify Spanish pride, hoping that it might be so favourably received that the confiscation of his property

would be rescinded. His hopes were fallacious: two years passed and still Philip of Spain had never even seen the "Amidigi". Bernardo took the subject from a recent French translation of an old twelfth-century Spanish romance, the adventures of Sir Amadis of Gaul (Wales), and this he embellished, and he introduced novel episodes, retaining the strange mistake of confusing the Gaul of the legend with France. It is the same story which Don Quixote discussed too much with "that man of learning who had taken degrees at Giguenza," the curate of the parish. The "Amidigi" was dull, correct, flowing; it pleased pedants, and hit the taste of the time. Guidobaldo exerted himself to get the Courts of Italy to interest themselves on Tasso's behalf, and bring pressure to bear on the Spanish monarch. There were many ready to promise, but none to perform. In truth the princely taste for letters and the princely fashion of supporting authors were on the wane in Italy.

There was at this time an Academy newly instituted at Venice, a society of wealthy patrons of letters that aspired to renown by bearing the expenses of elegant editions. The Academy offered to print the poem, and, further, asked Bernardo to become their secretary. The Duke advised him to accept, and untied his liberal purse-strings for immediate necessities; so Bernardo left Pesaro for Venice (1559), assured of the Duke's interest and protection; a matter that, even in Venice, was in those days not unimportant. The relief to Bernardo was great. "I am now out of the whirlpool of action," he wrote, "and hope to slip off the yoke of princely service that is so chafing, wearisome and hard—a yoke to which I have

been harnessed for forty years. Yet, though admitted by these excellent wits to be of their distinguished company, I none the less intend, God willing, to end my life in the place where I was born, and where the bones of my dear begetters lie." Illusive hope! He was not to spend his old age meditating under Bergamesque vines; there was no serene evening of life awaiting Bernardo Tasso, and the ill-fortune that had always dogged his steps still pursued him across the lagoons. Before very long the Academy was to get into trouble with the Senate; and Bernardo only escaped by a hairbreadth from the ruin that befel its members.

Bernardo could not do without Torquato; as soon as he was settled at Venice he sent for the boy. So bidding adieu to the kindly Duke and Duchess and to the young Prince, who remained his life-long friend, Torquato set out on his journey, happy in the prospect of novelty and of rejoining the father who loved him and whom he loved so much. He was now at the age when, to most of us, the world opens so well and is so full of bright expectation. He was fifteen.

We can imagine the lad seated in his gondola or barca, wondering at the "poppi" that stand so oddly at prow and stern, at their deft turn of wrist, and weird, warning cry to passing craft, or watching the quick passage of tiny wavelets that flicker into being at the whisper of each soft refreshing air. We can picture him gazing across the ooze of the lagoons to where the long ranges of dolomitic mountains make so rugged a sky-line, their snows not yet melted by the spring; or turning himself seaward; and there, lying on the waters, is a city im-

BERNARDO TASSO

FROM HIS "AMIDIGI." BRITISH MUSEUM

pearled, seen as in a dream, so delicate and milky is the haze; and then, drawing nearer and nearer, slender campanili shoot high up into the sky, and the glistening domes of San Marco reveal their stately curves, suggestive of dim processions across unfamiliar spaces and lingering echoes of the choir. Presently to cries of "sa premi!" "stai oh!" the strange new vessel threads fantastic waterways, and glides past palace fronts rich with intarsia of precious marble, and plainer façades that glow with fresh and splendid tones and vivid imaginations—pigments from the brush of Titian or Giorgione, fruitage of the Great Age yet unharmed by Time. And so our youthful poet beholds for the first time Venice, robed in the fulness of her splendour, a vision arrested and become authentic, an unsubstantial, unfathomable loveliness, cherished in silence and enfolded by her ministering sea.

The Tassi took up their abode not far from Zanipolo, the great church where the doges lie buried, somewhere between it and "where merchants most do congregate," the Rialto, but the quaint bridge with its graceful curve was not then built. They had a man-servant, and secured the services of an excellent woman-cook; for, as became people of condition, both father and son possessed educated palates and rejoiced in the artistic refinements of the table. Torquato was employed by his father in correcting proofs of the "Amidigi". He sat listening to the conversation of many great literati who were his father's friends, Veniero, Gradenigo, Molino, Patrizio and Ruscelli, names forgotten to-day, but of importance in their own time. His special friend was Aldo Manuzio, a lad of fourteen, the son of Paolo and the grandson of

the elder Aldo Manuzio, scholars, printers and publishers all of them, from whose *stamperia* came those priceless services to learning, the incomparable products of the Aldine press. Aldo had been cradled in scholarship, and brought up on scholia; he had just produced a learned work on the correct spelling of Latin, in which, no doubt, his father held at least a directing hand. Torquato employed his leisure hours to some extent in the study of Dante, a poet then considered very antiquated and hardly to be comprised in a gentlemanly course of education. It is possible that he found the "Divine Comedy" too mediæval for his taste. He had acquired a habit at Pesaro of annotating the margin of the page he read. His copy of Dante is in existence: the notes do not extend beyond two-thirds of the "Inferno," and they exhibit no great insight or sympathy. Probably the greater part of his leisure was taken up by the fascinations of an unaccustomed book, vividly illuminated and filled with strange, dubious gospel, Venice to wit, with all its flow of life.

The broad promenade of the Schiavoni was always full of business and bustle; Levantine cargoes loaded and unloaded at palace doors; shrewd Venetians were striking close bargains with subtle Greeks at every corner; everywhere there was the fuss and stir of a motley crowd. There were not a few turbaned Turks from Constantinople to be met with, for there was momentary peace in the long strife with the Ottoman —peace that was so profitable, and that the Venetians were ever seeking and so seldom found. There would be Armenians, whose home, maybe, lay in some romantic

valley of Asia Minor, or on the high table-land that is overlooked by Mount Ararat, or in some flourishing city of the rich plain watered by the Tigris and Euphrates. One would jostle against hybrid peoples from Smyrna and Scanderoon, degenerate renegades from the Morea and the Archipelago, Jews and Moors from Barbary, and even Negroes from beyond the Great Desert. On the broad waters that lie between Lido and Piazzetta and along the Giudecca gondole and barche and barchette threaded their way among many galleys of the State, slipping under sharp prows built for ramming and hulls extravagantly high and long oars resting idle on their thowls; or outpacing men-of-war that moved slowly in response to the powerful stroke of hidden galley-slaves, prisoners that worked in chains to the lash of the whip. There were galeasses, too, some being rowed to the ship-yards for repair; some with canvas unfurled and plying the oar; there were caravels, light craft from the Levant, and feluccas that carried merchandise along the coast, for ever shifting their lateen sails as they bore up the channels. And sometimes, and this not in war-time solely, these would unload, at San Giorgio or Rialto, some fresh cargo of human chattels—men and women of many races, that were confused together under the common designation of Saracens; also Bosnians and Greeks and strange species of humanity from barbarous lands, hyperboreans with matted hair from ice-bound Russia, and beardless Tartars, their narrow, shifty eyes and their legs bowed from overmuch riding on the steppes of Asia, causing comment and surprise. There were young maidens, too, beautiful of form and regular of feature, their large eyes full of

wonder and fear—Circassians, these, from Caucasian wilds, who would fetch a high price. Life is a stirring thing in the sixteenth century, and full of misadventure; and these slaves should account themselves fortunate that their destiny is not some other market than this, for the Venetians hold a good reputation as dealing kindly with their bondsmen.

Out of a side canal, issuing from beneath the low bridge, comes a gondola. The "poppi" wear scarlet silk stockings and otherwise are gaily attired. In front of the scarlet *felze* sits a young lady with her attendants surrounding her; she is being rowed to some convent to pay a complimentary visit to an aunt or a cousin before her wedding. And next day her father's palace is hung with damask and tapestry, and the servants, in new liveries fringed with gold lace and silver tags, are very busy. Scores of gondole are gathered round the doors. Presently the bride steps down the palace stairs and enters her boat. If you hurry to the broad campo where fife and trumpet are sounding, and enter the church, you will find several hundred ladies and gentlemen, in brave attire, awaiting the bride. The Company of the Calza, in uniform of light pantaloons fantastically parti-coloured, the *jeunesse dorée* of Venice is there and sings at the service. Two young people are made one: probably they will learn to love one another as indifferently well or hate one another with much the same fervour as other married folk; at present they are almost strangers, for the Venetian girl of the upper class leads a perfectly secluded life; she has been educated at a convent, and female life at her home has imitated that of the Eastern harem; the mar-

riage has been arranged by parental wisdom, avarice and family pride. Then the three hundred or so of the wedding guests issue from the church, each cavalier conducting a lady, gay with brocade of gold and as tall as himself: he leads her carefully and slowly lest she stumble, for she is raised on pattens a foot and a half high, a fashion set by a doge's daughter who copied it from the courtesans. All this fine company reach the gondole in procession and return to a banquet where they will feast off plates of gold, and after the banquet the bride will receive a good many verses from the gentlemen, purchased from some poet with a good reputation for classical learning, or worse epithalamia of their own composition. A long recital of the heroic deeds of ancestors follows, and the mimes enact the story of Jason or make the company laugh at some ridiculous burlesque. And all through the night the waters around remain musical.

And all goes well, for everything is managed by the exquisites of Venice, the Company of the Calza. You may know them by their hose; they are the life of all that is joyous here; their avocation is to grace all marriages with their presence, to ensure the success of every private entertainment; if not some rich noble, it is they who bear the expenses of temporary theatres—scaffoldings ornamented by the genius of Titian and Tintoret; they who pay those actors thereon who amused you but yesterday with verses gross and clever and the musicians who interposed such light and lively airs.

Last week there was a public fête. Cannon was being fired off at the arsenal the live-long day through, and each campo was joyous with fife and rebec, French acrobats,

German strong men, and jugglers from Constantinople. The gondole were hung with cloth of gold and silver, and filled with men and women in whimsical attire; many of these costumes were of velvet and gold lace, with superfluity of fringes and bows. You could almost walk across the Grand Canal and the Giudecca, so crowded were they with craft. Every palace was illuminated at night, and there were banquets at many—banquets that lasted for hours, and were enlivened by singers and instrumental music and the antics of mimes. The meats were rare, things out of season and purchased at great expense; there was much sweetstuff, also, cast into the likeness of grotesque dragons and dainty conceits, and much of it bore the likeness of the masterpieces of statuary. The table was decorated with exotics that exhaled delicious odours, and everybody had a serviette folded into some fanciful pattern. You drank choice wine from Greek and Syrian vineyards, or even from those of the Rhine, out of glasses of Murano, delicate in colour and delightful in design, for these were days before wealth became divorced from taste. Servants washed your hands in bowls of gold and silver, and candelabra, that were works of art in the same precious metals, gave you light. All ended with a stately dance; and music sounded sweet on the waters as your gondola took you home. The crisp morning air came blowing in fresh from the sea, and was welcome, for dawn was near, and the moon looked nearly as pallid and weary as the faces of your friends in the gondole that companioned your own.

Venice was a busy mart by day, a very whirlpool of pleasure by night. Life would have been an unendurable

excitement but for the noiseless carriage along its waterways and the possibility of escape to tranquil islands and the silence of the lagoon. Even in the districts inhabited by the poor the nights were lively, for the men of the quarter serenaded the girls; and on Sunday all the workers of the great arsenal turned out, *en masse*, perfumed and dressed in velvet. There were wedding feasts in these quarters too, but they were the results of mutual attraction. The artisan, if he thought he did not displease, asked permission to court of his own parents and the girl's. If it were granted, rings were exchanged by way of gage and other presents too; but not a comb, which was an instrument of sorcery, nor scissors, nor pins, which would cause connubial jarrings.

People could not even be buried quietly in Venice. There were nightly funeral processions along the narrow calli to the churches. Flags of the guilds headed them; priests followed the flag-bearers, decked in the stoles of their order, sailors, two and two, bearing candles, and an innumerable host all holding lights. Then came the bier supported by eight persons and covered by cloth of gold. Servants followed and "Gesuati," who were lay brothers engaged in some useful manufacture; guildsmen in strange attire, each bearing a lance or torch; charity children, and then all the ward in a crowd. The body was borne to one of the churches, where men and women sat apart, for in religion as in vice the manners of the Orient made themselves felt in Venice; and the relations gathered in a knot and howled and tore their hair in true Eastern fashion. And next day they went

in deep mourning to the palace or the Rialto to receive condolence.

But the hubbub of the city was at its worst at the frequent fairs. At least a hundred thousand strangers would be present. The inns were packed with the representatives of every nation; the chief hotels were the Lamb of God, the Golden Lion, and the Cavaletto, that still stands. The consecration of every church, too, was a psychological moment which the trader seized. There were stalls everywhere; stalls hung with lace (not more than two fingers broad by sumptuary edict, but such edicts were always being issued and always disregarded or evaded); stalls for the sale of cloth—plain cloth, silver cloth, gold cloth—stalls for velvet, satin, silk, damask; stalls for gilded leather to furnish walls withal; stalls for chairs and household necessities; stalls for men, stalls for women; a lady might purchase everything, from that useful article a mirror to admire herself in, down to such superfluous luxuries as a book to improve her mind. And the guilds regulated all. No wonder that the census of 1582 only gives 187 beggars in Venice. The humblest homes are not wholly destitute of comfort, and the watermen sit under oars that are trophies of water-races and portraits of ancestors who have won a prize.

Women of quality came tumbling along the winding calli, supported by slaves, and sometimes falling even then. The pattens were heavy, and such slow, difficult progression was heating, so they fanned their bare bosoms and shoulders with *ventagli* of feathers fixed into handles of ivory inlaid; they wore veils, which, if they were handsome, they took care should be transparent; they had

velvet toques on, ruffs set with pearls, ornaments of enamelled gold, turquoise rings and bracelets of delicate workmanship, lace gloves, skin-coloured or of embroidered silk, crimson stockings; the hair was frizzed, and they spent half the day drying it in the sun, or bathing in scented water. Their lives were futile enough. From the flat house roofs, peering over the flower-pots that every house-top bore, the courtesans sat watching them with contempt, for while the ladies of the monde were ill-educated and kept in restraint, many of the public women were like the *hetairai* of Greece, cultivated in music and letters, witty in conversation, and refined. The great ladies copied their fashions, and their manners, too, as far as they dared. The demi-mondaines ogled the men from behind a lattice, or joined the great nobles at collations that were taken *al fresco* in sight of all.

Patricians passed you in violet caftans and with no rapiers at their girdle—instruments of defence were not needful in Venice. Then there were grave learned men of repute, doctors of law in Padua, to be seen, wearing their distinctive robes of black serge trimmed with ermine, that they had put on with anxious care lest the embroidered shirt should be hid. And you would brush against mischievous school-boys wearing high black caps, below which hung the long curls that their mothers adored; these caps were garlanded with pearls or little medals; their doublets were of satin or silk, often adorned with gold buttons and lace; or of canvas only if they were lads of lower rank.

And down some side rio there were glimpses to be had of the canal, where by day the ladies shot glances of

intelligence from their gondole, and, of an evening, sat behind the lattice or on the overhanging balconies, listening to serenades and admiring the easy grace of elegant admirers.

Bernardo Tasso came to Venice with all the *éclat* that attached to a man of birth who stood well at an illustrious court; one, moreover, who had achieved no small reputation as a poet. All the literary and aristocratic society of the city was open to him—a society still serene of mind, energetic of will, full of sound learning and honest effort, possessed of a certain singular dignity of its own (for the guardianship of the State was its heritage, and it was conscious of great traditions and great duties), yet exhibiting, even now, the over-ripeness that heralds decay, and breathing an atmosphere that was faint with luxury. Venice itself, gorgeous as an Eastern dream, and as much of its voluptuous society as an adolescent might be admitted to, must have wielded no small power over Torquato. Such luxurious fascination must have sunk deep into his imagination. It is this, perhaps, which reappears in many a witchery and enchantment of his murmurous verse.

The city was full of those congenial coteries that called themselves Academies. These societies were the outgrowth of reunions of scholars that were to be found even in the fourteenth century, when the friends of Marsigli, the Florentine friar, himself a friend of Petrarch, used to meet together for profitable discussion at the Augustinian monastery. In the fifteenth century the famous Platonic Academy was wont to meet in the pleasant gardens of the Badìa on the hillside of Fiesole.

Enthusiastic scholars such as Marsiglio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola, men acquainted with the flexible grace of literary Attic, the ironical dialectic of Socrates, the mystic speculations of the Phædrus and the ethical audacities of the Republic, drew men to Florence from all parts of Europe. Their symposia began with a banquet, were continued by a discussion, and ended with the singing of a sacred hymn to the great Greek thinker. "Here," said Marsiglio Ficino, "youth learned, in pleasant pastime, how to do right and communicate their own thoughts and feelings in vivid words; here maturity studied how to govern the Republic and the household; here age was consoled with the prospect of a life beyond the grave." Academies sprang up all over Italy. At first the members made antiquity a cult and almost a religion; then, with the flowering of Italian letters, they directed themselves, like the French Pléaides, to the study of their own language, and, being like most scholars, men of narrow if not mediocre intelligence, they locked themselves up in pedantry, and endeavoured to impose their own fetters on men of real spirit and life.

Venice had always favoured learning. Those of the merchant nobles who possessed a doctor's degree sat in specially distinguished seats at the Grand Council. They lectured on philosophy in the churches. They became the associates of academies that met in senatorial palaces, or in senators' gardens on the islands of the lagoons, or at their villas on the mainland. There were many reunions to which eminent painters and musicians were admitted; but not all of these coteries were organised into academies.

Artists such as Titian became wealthy, for the State gave them lucrative official posts that were practically sinecures. Titian could afford to entertain princes, and at his house and at the best houses in Venice there were musical evenings, attended by famous professional musicians, though some of the painters also took part, for they sang and played well, and in the last generation Sebastian del Piombo was admired as a lute player and Giorgione both sang and played in quite professional style. Thus, on one side artists and literary men were the honoured members of coteries that also included all the wealthiest and noblest of the Venetian aristocracy and senators of most ancient lineage; but they also had relations with the poorest of their brethren. Each painter belonged to the guild of his trade, which included such humble folk as ornament makers, with whom he associated at least twice a year; and all the members were bound to work honestly and to aid one another. Those academies that were organised employed themselves, moreover, in more useful work than merely arranging symposia or indulging in rhetoric and disputation; they set up printing-presses, brought up the fatherless, dowered poor girls, and gave aid to the indigent. They met at country villas or in the palaces of the city, which were often furnished with as good libraries as those of the monasteries that were for public use, and also with collections of medals, arms and works of art.

Here, then, were to be met the great colourists who placed Venice first on the scroll of art, who added the last jewels to the crown of her immortality, and bore her famous skill to the zenith of its perfection. There was the veteran Titian, now over eighty years of age; but his

eye remained undimmed, nor had his hand lost its cunning. He was at this time busy painting with a touch broad and firm as ever the grand figure and splendid drapery of *Sapientia* (Wisdom) on the ceiling of the vestibule of the library at the palace. He was also painting the Actæon, the Calista, and Christ in the Sepulchre for Philip of Spain, and dunning him for payment. Titian dwelt by what is now the Fondamenta Nuova and was then green fields and gardens, with an outlook over the lagoon towards Murano and his native Alps of Cadore. It was here that he received and feasted the great ones of the earth, and painted the portraits of princes who competed for that honour. Here they had sometimes to suffer from the independence that characterised not Titian alone but all the great Venetian masters. The creature of one prince complains that his master found this "most discourteous man" out when he had announced his intention of dining with him. Titian's friend Pietro Aretino, the coward that was always in dread of a thrashing and who yet contrived to make kings his tributaries, wielding no other weapon than a quill, that portentous tickler of strange trout, had been dead these two years or more. He died of an apoplexy, and, some said, laughing. Perhaps a common love of nature had drawn them together. All Titian's oldest friends were dead, but he had a rich nature and was ever well inclined to others. Youthful painters looked for encouragement to the aged king of their art; it was he who selected painters to adorn the library, he who presented Paolo Veronese in the name of the Republic with a collar of gold.

Veronese, too, so amiable and generous to his friends

and so excellent a father, was painting away with colossal energy; fixing for an eternal memory the resplendent costumes and sumptuous banquets of Venice. He was also busy at the ducal palace itself, recording on great spaces, in his own silvery lights and an atmosphere that one can breathe, with all needful dignity of action and grace of pose, the power and the pride of Venice, her unsuspicious contentment in the special protection of God, and her joy in the life He had given her.

There was a man dwelling not far from Titian, yet no great friends were they, Jacopo Robusti, nicknamed "Tintoretto," "the little dyer," and also "Furioso," from the vehement rapidity with which he did his work. He was painting, for love only, the ceilings of a chapel where the confraternity of San Rocco prayed. Veronese, Schiavone, Salviati and Zucchero had sent in designs for a centrepiece. It was an honour as well as profitable to paint for a community to which doges and senators were proud to belong. Tintoretto painted a complete picture and presented it as a gift, nor could the brethren refuse it, for their bye-laws forbade. Just at the time at which we have arrived a little daughter was born to him, destined to accompany him, dressed in boy's clothes, as his assistant, and to become famous for her skill in portraiture. Of Tintoretto many tales were told. He had once drawn a dagger while painting Aretino, and then calmed his sitter's alarm by telling him he only wished to take his measure. Free from the servility of court-service the Venetian painter could be provokingly independent. Tintoretto told one noble sitter, who wished his jewels and rich habit to be put in, that he had better get a painter of animals

GROUP OF VENETIAN PAINTERS AS MUSICIANS

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: P. VERONESE, TINTORETTO, JACOPO DA BASSANO, BENEDETTO CALIARI, TITIAN

P. VERONESE. DETAIL FROM "MARRIAGE AT CANA." LOUVRE

to do the work. He aimed at combining the design of Raphael with the colour of Titian. He painted with different brushes, according to the occasion, said the Venetians—now it was of lead, now of silver, now of gold. In profound imagination and spiritual insight he ranks with the greatest, nor can one visit the Scuola di San Rocco without receiving a new revelation like

> some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet comes within his ken.

Then there was Sansovino. The great architect was busy rearing delightful palaces, remarkable for the graceful inventiveness of their decorations and the free treatment they displayed. The Public Library he had designed was already erected, but Sansovino was still busy adorning the grand canal with new palaces and the buildings round the Piazza with colossal statues and work in bronze that was, perhaps, a little over-ornamented and unquiet. And Andrea Palladio, the pedant of architecture, having finished beautifying Vicenza, his birthplace, with some of the finest of Renascence palaces, was now busy designing a new island church, San Giorgio Maggiore, and reducing the stately beauty of classical architecture to lifelessness by his works on the grand canal. But if you visited a country villa of his conception you would not find it without a certain fascination.

Thus, the young Torquato breathed an air far too heavy with the perfumes of voluptuous magnificence. As his father's son he must have dwelt much among those who best exhibited the rich refined taste, and alas! also the frivolity and vainglory of Venetian life. The senators were forsaking trade for the artificial dignity of false ideals.

Merchants' bales were to be found in the vestibules of but few palaces now; the trader had set up as a landed proprietor, and spent the hot season in some superb villa on the mainland. Some of the palaces were occupied by men who had risen from nothing and were making huge fortunes in trades that the nobles had abandoned. They imitated those who had their family names inscribed in the "Golden Book," by patronising letters and filling their mansions with luxury and works of art. Every palace, old or new, had a court, the portico of which was adorned with flags and escutcheons, and wherein there were armour and orange-trees, and often a fountain played. A grand staircase led to large, lofty rooms with superb chimney-pieces and painted ceilings; the walls were hung with pictures and supported candelabra of inlaid bronze; the floor had Eastern rugs. A great heavy table, richly carved, stood in the centre of the room and bore vases of precious metal and Murano glass. Each room had an alcove or two, and in the alcove was a bed of rare wood, inlaid. There was little comfort, for the indifference to physical ease of the Middle Ages persisted, but there were stiff-backed chairs inlaid with ivory, and elaborately chiselled prie-dieus, and wonderful chests with masterpieces painted beneath the lids. There were recesses that were filled with illuminated manuscripts and precious works of art. No young ladies were to be seen about: they were away in the seclusion of some convent, but their mother was there, perhaps—she would be certain to be there if there was a fête—and other ladies too, all much bejewelled, their faces and necks painted; all a trifle stupid and very ill-informed. They showed best in the garden of the country

villa, which was always a palace of delight, retiring into the privacy of their own apartments when symposia were held there.

In those days there was a certain great Pope of letters, one Sperone Speroni, a professor at the renowned Venetian University of Padua. He dominated all the academies; he was a terrible dictator; the entire world trembled before him; scholars and poets and bookmen were careful to speak him fair, and were shaken by the slightest approach to a frown of this literary Jupiter. Bernardo Tasso wished to submit the "Amidigi" to his critical judgment, and sent Torquato to Padua with it. The lad thus made the acquaintance of a man from whom he was to suffer many things. Speroni pronounced favourably, and, before long, Bernardo, the most careful and solicitous of parents, wrote to him, asking him to find lodgings for Torquato at Padua in a region remote from bad company, for he had determined to send his son to that ancient Mother of Learning.

CHAPTER IV

UNIVERSITY LIFE

Student Life at Padua—Calf-love—The "Rinaldo"—Students at Bologna —A Squib and its Results—A Paduan Academy

TORQUATO would land at Fusina and enter a barge that ran on wheels and was drawn up by pulleys to the Paduan waterway. Thence there were twenty miles of perfectly straight canal to the city, and on either side, as John Evelyn described it, flat land "deliciously adorned with country villas and gentlemen's retirements, gardens planted with oranges, figs and other fruit belonging to ye Venetians. The toune stands on the river Padus" (this is an error) "whence its name, and is generally built like Bologna on arches and on brick, so that one may walk round it dry and in the shade, which is very convenient in these hot countries." Arcades everywhere! these were almost distinctive of the two great University towns: they lined narrow, tortuous lanes and supported heavy, solemn mansions, only ceasing where, every here and there, one came abruptly on some branch of the Bacchiglione, spanned by an ancient bridge of Roman masonry. The Italian Cambridge plumed itself on new churches quite in the latest style; on a great Gothic building capped by oriental domes, wherein were treasured the sacred bones of San Antonio; on sculptures of Donatello,

workmanship that seemed to be alive, and rows of Roman warriors in fresco who looked down with stoic dignity on the exertions of a later age that had become strangely perturbed and fidgety, for Paduan artists had caught the spirit of ancient days from Paduan scholars. But, above all, Paduans were proud of their University. No humble abode of learning this, but the ancient palace of the Signors of Padua, and it had been newly colonnaded by Sansovino.

But the most novel of Paduan sights were its streets, crowded by the "nations" of the University; for students flocked thither from foggy Britain and sunny Cyprus, from chilly Poland and genial Sicily; men of all ages, and all ranks, arrived to pursue the study of letters or physic or law. Most of the students were just released from parental control and under no special supervision, youths freed from the moral conventions of their proper lands, and with the heretical blood of youth bounding through their veins and set all a-gallop by the fervid Italian sun. There was many a street brawl and free fight among these hot-heads, and men of judgment kept behind their own barred doors by night, for the scholars were disinclined to wait for the ceremony of an introduction, but apt to bestow very striking attentions on the belated foot passenger. There were sinister creatures of prey lurking about, too, ready to swoop down on the unwary—night-hawks, silent of wing and sharp of beak and talon.

On St. Luke's day, 1561, Torquato Tasso, aged seventeen, was present with about 700 other men and lads in the joyous April of life, at the opening festival of the

commencing session—a function of very solemn character in which the grave burghers shared. He inscribed his name in the book of the "nation" to which he belonged, and on the first of November commenced to study the Law.

There have been many youths who have forsaken their proper studies to spoil pens, and a few impelled to enrich letters. Among the latter was Torquato Tasso—

> A clerk destined his father's soul to cross,
> Who penned a stanza when he should engross.

The dulness of severe discipline becomes irksome to most men at the time of life that is so responsive to allurements of lighter poise; the dulcet warblings of other sirens than the Law find ready echo, and Tasso, like his great predecessors, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Ariosto, sharpened his quill less to chronicle the dry complexities of the *Jus Romanum* than to record these delicious notes. He tells us that he was a man always given rather to meditation than to much reading, and was devoted in his youth to the literature of love. He did not ignore his proper studies, but he found them to be disagreeable, and he pursued them only from a sense of duty. His vital occupation at this time was the composition of a poem which should relate the strange adventures of Rinaldo the Paladin, who loved and won Clarice, the beautiful daughter of Ivon, King of Gascony. But this was not all: his own heart was captured by the charms of a living maiden.

At this time the Cardinal d'Este came to Padua with his sister Leonora, and in the train of this princess was a young lady of distinguished Ferrarese lineage. Lucrezia

Bendidio was two years younger than Tasso, good-looking, with "a voice like that of an angel". People at Tasso's age are usually in love with love, and it does not require much persuasion for them to welcome love's bidding in the first sweet voice they hear. Of course verse was the inevitable outcome: some of it saw the light thirty-one years later; for the first part of the poems published at Mantua in 1592 would seem to have been inspired by Lucrezia and really written now. Torquato's passion aroused a fellow-student to take up the pen also: Diomede Borghesi, afterwards one of Tasso's adverse and pedantic critics, reproved him in a sonnet in which this lad tells the other that while the flame drives him to blaze like a lamp abroad, within he is consuming himself drop by drop. Then, with the smugness of the youthful prig, Borghesi asks Tasso why he does not heal the wound and take himself (Borghesi) for a model, "who tastes no such sharp suffering, but is happy in striving to honour Euterpe". The love lasted a whole year. The sonnets show a transition from youthful transport to the courtly service of love, which was all the fashion, and had been so in Italy for more than three hundred years. Torquato beseeches the lady, who is about to be given to a husband, that she will not now disvalue his love and the renown his verse will give her. The lady sneered at a letter and snubbed him at a ball. Torquato tried to imitate Petrarch and keep the sentiment alive, but finally he forgets his model chivalry, and even the generosity of a gentleman: he tells the lady that he has escaped from the meshes of her locks, though they were of rippling gold and fair clear amber; he is no longer a captive of phantom beauty

that so quickly fades; "Lo! I dismiss the false light; men may see thee as thou art, mocked and scorned".

Very likely Bernardo Tasso misdoubted from the first whether his son would really give himself to the law. He was anxious that Torquato should be independent of the fluctuations of court favour; and a successful lawyer was more or less an independent man; moreover, the profession was a lucrative one. No one knew better than Bernardo "how wretched is that poor man who hangs on princes' favours"; his own condition at this very time was pitiable; he was receiving precarious aid from the Cardinal Luigi d'Este. Yet a purely literary career was scarcely possible in the sixteenth century without princely aid, and, after all, the court had a certain irresistible fascination; our own Spenser, whose experience was of duller entertainments than those of Italy, wrote of the court that it was the fatal place

> Where all the braverie that eye may see
> And all the happinesse that heart desire
> Is to be found: he nothing can admire
> That hath not seene that heaven's portraiture.

Though there was plenty of provision for poor scholars at the rich University, Bernardo chose to put his son under the wing of Annibale di Capua, a student destined for the Church and to succeed his uncle in the bishopric of Otranto. Bernardo soon became aware of what was going on in the way of study, and, like the wise father he was, let Torquato pursue philosophy and rhetoric rather than law. "It is vain labour to oppose the consuming desire of youth: the full torrent will to its end," wrote he.

There were both public lecturers and private tutors at

the Universities; there were also learned men who held no definite office, but whom the presence of a learned centre attracted. There were many houses where distinguished scholars and promising pupils met and sharpened their wits in the clash of controversy. A lad of Tasso's talent and ancestry was a welcome member of this sparkling society. He made many friends, and among them was one with whom he became very intimate, Scipione Gonzaga of the great Mantuan house, a youth two years older than himself, destined in the fulness of time to become Cardinal Gonzaga. The two began a friendship which endured through life. There would seem to have been something peculiarly attractive in Torquato's personality at this time. Of a highly sensitive nature, pensive, with flashes of high imagination and endowed with quite his full share of the luscious richness of expression that is so natural and pleasing to the Italian, his gifts were tempered by strenuous discipline; well-born, accomplished in all knightly exercise and accustomed from his earliest years to mingle with the most polished literati and the greatest nobles of his time, he was perfectly at his ease in society; moreover, he was commandingly tall, graceful of figure and bearing; and a little short-sightedness, probably the result of much reading, and a slight stutter, the sign of a high-strung nervous system, were but foils to his qualities and added to their attractiveness.

Torquato had not been many months at the University before he produced a number of funeral laments, and had that most delightful of all joys that visit the youthful poet—seeing his work for the first time in print. At the brilliant gatherings of Paduan society, poems were

read and discussed line by line and point by point. Very likely Torquato had brought canzone to these meetings, certainly he brought his "Rinaldo," an epic written in ten months, in the midst of serious academical work and social distractions. Professors urged its publication. Bernardo gave reluctant consent, and got Cardinal Luigi d'Este to accept a dedication, and Gonzaga obtained privileges for the edition from the Duke of Mantua, the Venetian Republic, and other Italian States. "Rinaldo" achieved success; it was evident that a new and brilliant star had arisen, for this work of a lad of eighteen exhibited not merely the boldness and confidence of youth but freshness and power. The poem was flowing and sonorous; the sentences were polished and well-rounded; it had moving love-passages, and the situations were interesting; it aimed at romantic adornment while following old classic models; like all the poems of the period it gave discreet flattery to great families by delicate allusions. It was but the production of youth, but as Ménage says, altering Longinus, its immaturity was that of Tasso.

There were at this time two professors of rhetoric at Padua, for the authorities sought to promote learning by the stimulation of rivalry. But the rivalry between these professors became very acute, and their followers divided into hostile factions. Sigonio was the abler teacher, but he was as meek and patient as his colleague, Robertello, was vain and over-bearing. The students of both classes met and fought in the streets, and Sigonio, who was passing by on one of these occasions, had his face slashed by a poniard. He withdrew to Bologna, carrying Pendasio, another famous professor, and many students with

him. Now the University of Bologna, the mother of all such institutions, was in the Papal States, and had been rebuilt and remodelled of late by Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan. It was in the heart of a venerable town of towers and arcades and vast churches and sumptuous palaces, whereof the sharp edges caught the sun and deepened by contrast the cool shadows below—a city of statues and rich altars that set forth a great dignity and a great devotion.

Gio-Angelo Papio, the most famous of the Bolognese professors, was a friend of Bernardo Tasso, and at his instigation, perhaps not unaccompanied by a suggestion of University subsidies, Torquato removed to Bologna, November, 1562. There was the additional attraction that his cousins, Ercole and Cristofero, were also going thither to study. The fame of "Rinaldo" and an introduction from his father threw open the hospitable doors of Monsignore Cesi. Cesi was vice-legate of Borromeo; though not specially learned himself, his house was a centre for philosophical and literary discussion, and Torquato took a lively part at these gatherings. Another academy of younger men met at the house of Spinola, a rich Genoese student. A year later this same Spinola killed a man in a dispute about one of the swarm of courtesans that infested Bologna, and fled to Padua. Ultimately he was pardoned by the Pope, for much had to be overlooked in these University towns, which were the scene of endless brawls, duels and assassinations. Torquato often had to spend the night at some friend's house, for it was unsafe to return home without armed attendants and plenty of torch-bearers. Mediæval

manners lingered among the students, and it behoved the authorities not to be too severe with them. For, in the ancient rough and tumble times, the professors and students had once removed *en masse* to Siena, because their "liberties" were interfered with. This constrained the citizens to eat humble pie and implore their return; and a cry of "privilege" was sure to be responded to even now. In this wild air Torquato would seem to have borne himself much like the young men around him. He admits that his most intimate friend, Santini, was "carried by his youthful passions somewhat beyond the boundaries of strict reason," and one of his cousins bore tales to Bergamo concerning Tasso himself. We may be very sure that, at least, he did not fail

To catch the blossom of the flying term.

We all know how many youthful satires and pasquinades are circulated at a university. In Tasso's day everybody was lashed and everybody laughed. But there was a specially clever and biting lampoon launched at a young relative of Marc Antonio Arese, the "Auditore Criminale" of Bologna, early in 1564. Tasso had taken delight in reeling off the lines of this pasquinade, and he was reputed to be its author. Coming home from the house of a Count della Porta at a late hour, alone and unarmed (itself a reckless proceeding), he almost fell into the arms of a patrol of police that tried to arrest him, but, favoured by darkness, he successfully dodged them and escaped with the aid of friends. Meanwhile, another squadron had entered his lodgings and sequestrated his books and papers. He fled to Mantua (for his father

was now in the service of the Gonzaghi), but Bernardo was absent with the Duke. Count Rangoni, an old friend of the Tassi, stowed him away at his country fief, and there he lay quiet for a time. Meanwhile, an investigation was made at Bologna and many students were examined. Some were warm partisans, others turned out to be rather bitter foes. It is clear that Tasso was not a universal favourite. A document was somehow discovered and dug out of the ground at the University. It stated that Tasso was the author of the squib, and that, for the injury he had done the school and its reputation, it was to be hoped some one would give him the "wooden crown he deserved" (*i.e.*, a cudgelling). One witness said he had demanded of Tasso if he were the author, as so many said, but Tasso denied it; nevertheless, when asked to repeat some verses he gave them all. This witness, however, added that he had heard it said that Tasso had not brains enough to write it. Citation after citation was left at Torquato's door—of course he was never found there, and finally the matter was dropped. Torquato wrote a letter to Monsignore Cesi full of very subtle and much too ingenious protestations: he lays great stress on the fact that the manuscript was not found in his room.[1] The case against him certainly looks suspicious. Pasquinade was not, it is true, in his vein, but then who from internal evidence would divine that the grave, rigorous Dante had begotten three quite unspeakable canzonette in his untroubled years; who would connect the sedate and mature Milton with frisky, somewhat insensitive epitaphs in the heyday of his youth;

[1] Tasso lived in the palazzo that is now No. 10 Via Imperiale.

or associate Tennyson, fastidious as any drawing-room lady, with masculine conversation and pungent retort?

Torquato received a warm invitation from Scipione Gonzaga to become his guest, join the academy which met at his house, and resume his studies at his old University. There was a passion in Italy for these societies; each little literary coterie in each little town constituted itself into an academy. There were academies rather of a bacchanalian than of a studious cast, too, and buffoons by profession were not more wanting to these than fools by nature to those of more serious pretensions. There were ill-natured fools to be found, moreover, and while feigning the highest aims, the brethren often exhibited the vices of hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness in their most liberal forms. The more private but not the least influential of these associations affected titles that were supposed to be humorous, and each member would call himself by some ridiculous name. The famous Della Cruscan Academy took its title from the bolting-cloth. There were the Sleepers, the Bright Ones, the Dark Ones, the Soft Ones, the Rough Ones, the Moists, the Fieries, etc., etc.; and among the members one would find the Eel, the Frog, or Night, or Demogorgon, holding forth on Plato and poetry, and sometimes even a little mathematic was discussed. In darkening days these societies were witnesses to the unquenchable intellectual life of Italy; they had a profound and, too often, a pedantic and repressive influence on her genius.

Tasso returned to Padua and attended the lectures of Francesco Piccolomini at Padua; he worked hard at Aristotle, and annotated his volumes of Plato. He was

never wearied of collecting all the flowers of ancient writers to embellish or furnish suggestions for a great poem that was already fermenting in his mind. Philosophical subjects shook his faith a little now, but he never seems to have had his soul torn by real doubt, and he tells us that he never read heretical books. He indulged a purely intellectual interest in dialectics, and confesses that he took up philosophical studies to inquire and not to live. The inner strife was not serious; his was not the nature to pursue "the high white star of Truth" through blood and tears, up the briar-entangled path by which alone some evasive glimpse of final victory may come for a moment and elude.

The academy instituted by Gonzaga called itself The Eterei (The Ethereals). Tasso took the name of Il Pentito (The Penitent), perhaps because he repented ever having left Padua, perhaps because he discovered something in himself to reform. In a sonnet he says that he ought to relinquish the worship of a fair one and return to his studies, and it is thought that this new object of worship was Laura Peperara, the daughter of a wealthy mercantile house of Mantua. We find in a madrigal the lines

> Felice chi raccoglie
> *Pepe* nel *lauro* tra le verdi foglie (*Laura Peperara*)

just as in earlier verse we come across

> Donna, sovra tutt 'altri a voi conviensi
> (Se *luce e reti* suona) il vostro nome (*Lucrezia*).

As Solerti points out, these Italian Platonists derived a mystical doctrine of the natural fitness of names from the Cratylus. It was, moreover, the fashion of the time

to indulge in puerile conceits, and torture them—and the modern reader, as students of our own Elizabethan and Jacobean literature know only too well. Probably Torquato saw Laura from time to time when his father was dwelling at the Mantuan court. Many years after she came to Ferrara, in the train of Margherita Gonzaga, the bride of Duke Alfonso II., and, in 1583, Tasso again made verses for her—they were for her wedding.

About this time a young man who was Tasso's dearest friend went to Mantua to die. Santini, a youth of most brilliant promise, was, like Keats and so many of Earth's brightest and best, a victim to a "lingering, dull dismay". He was in a consumption. The last sad days can be painted in a word. Tasso and his mother sat by the bedside and watched; they were with the lad when he died and closed his eyes. When the end came Torquato returned to Padua, and after the manner of Latin races and the usage of academies, he and other members of the Ethereals, of whom Santini had been president, recorded his worth and the manner of his passing in sepulchral orations. Tasso's words at least were moving, for they were heartfelt. Then he resumed his studies with eager zeal, that he might become a worthy lover of the incomparable Laura. But his father said that his advance in learning was greater than in meekness; and it is quite likely that, like most young men, he did not bear the fame well that he had won so early and so easily. How few show perfect metal when the touchstone of success is applied!

And now, the pleasant life at Padua was to end. Through the exertions of Bernardo, Torquato was taken

into the service of Cardinal Luigi d'Este, the brother of Alfonso II., Duke of Ferrara. We can imagine the affectionate farewells exchanged with Gonzaga and other comrades; for Tasso had the faculty of securing loyalty and devotion from those to whom he gave his friendship. The day-dreams of youth we need not imagine, for do we not know them—the buoyant hope, the confident boldness with which, before we have tasted the gifts of Fate, we dare to launch our untried bark?

CHAPTER V

EARLY MANHOOD. IN THE CARDINAL'S SERVICE

Ferrara—Court Life—Alfonso II. of Este—Cardinal Luigi—Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este—The Uncles and Cousins of the Duke—The Nobility—Pigna—Montecatini—Guarini—Death of Bernardo Tasso—Francesco Maria, Prince of Urbino—A Court of Love—The Courtly Service of Love—Tasso and the Princesses—A Journey to France—Scene at the French Court—Return to Italy

THE melancholy Po wanders high above its delta to the sea, kept in its slow course by great embankments that the Estensi raised. Below it is a fertile but malarious land. Three and a half miles from the river decayed bastions and a heavy, dull-red Castello indicate the presence of a town. A mouldering city surrounds this dominating fortress. The streets are broad, and great gaunt mansions give evidence of former prosperity; their basements are sometimes under water, for, in spite of irrigation works, Ferrara is subject to visitations of flood. There is no particular architectural interest attaching to the place; there is the usual wealth of pictures, it is true, but many an Italian village contains masterpieces enough to furnish a gallery; there are some monuments that indicate where dead princes rest for ever. The silence is unbroken save by the rattle of some solitary carriage or the sweeping of the wind from across the plain. The custodian of the castle will show you a chill gloomy dungeon below

DUCAL CASTLE, FERRARA

the lion-tower: it is where Parisina, the faithless wife, and Ugo, the unnatural son, lay while they awaited their doom.

Yet Ferrara was once the gayest place in Italy, and boasted the most refined and luxurious of European courts. The sluggish canal was a sparkling river, where pageants glided, fair as the phantasms of a dream; the dull avenues were citron groves then, along which swept the echoes of music; they connected the many pleasaunces of the Duke—pleasaunces of streams and fish-ponds and artificial hills that broke the monotony of the plain. This dull town of faded gentility was full of new and beautiful palaces, each with its garden where the stately tenants took the air. The full, merry tide of life bore along the spacious streets, and one heard the quick chaffering of the market-place, the ringing of the hammer and the sawing of building stone. Citizens, bent on profit, jostled each other as they hurried by; there was the cracking of whips and the thundering of cumbrous equipages; there was the unbarring of gates and the glancing of spears; cavalcades of gentlemen and ladies in gay attire came riding over the drawbridge; horses fretted at the rein and hounds pulled at the leash as the court went out a-hunting. Wealthy folk came from all parts to abide in this pleasant place; they filled its palaces or dwelt in country villas near, each house surrounded by its spacious garden. The Estensi had many pleasaunces not merely in the neighbourhood of the city, but even inside the walls, and there was a ducal park stocked with the wild animals of strange lands. Ferrara was on the high road from Germany to Rome and Loreto, and was visited by thousands of *forestieri*. It was a manufacturing city,

too, and the reigning dukes were wealthy by reason of its wealth and the great revenue they drew from the fertile plain and the salt-pans of Comacchio. They had always been a talented and politic breed; their administration was considered wise and liberal in those days, and they had allied themselves by intermarriage with half the Princes of Europe, and were perpetually receiving visits from the members of illustrious houses. They had associated themselves with immortal names. Ariosto and Boiardo had been their dependants, and they were the most liberal and the most famous of all patrons of the fine arts. They blended the traditions of feudal courtesy with those of humanistic culture, and nourished a new school of poetry. It was from Ferrara that there came the Masque and the Musical Drama and the Epic of Romance.

The Castello was always ablaze with pageantry, and gilded casque and waving plume at the tourney made seem as if chivalry were still alive. The halls of Este were adorned by the best architects and the best sculptors; one would deem them to belong to Apollo and the Muses and visited by Venus and her son. The court masques and the court dramas were gems of literature and the best staged in Europe. Ferrara attracted professional musicians from every country. Hardly a day passed without entertainment; plays and concerts were given in artificial temples; and jousts and tourneys were held in lists that famous artists did not disdain to arrange; there were recitations of new verses by great poets, and gay companies gathered for hawking or fishing or the hunt. Such indulgences seemed to be the object of exist-

ence. The Castello, the ducal residence, was in the very heart of a Vanity Fair, and, connected with each other to the south and west of the Castello, were the palaces of the various Estensi, each a court that tried to outrival the others with feast and festival and in all manner of extravagance.

For this exquisite life the subject paid, and paid heavily. The game laws were bloody; the peasantry were dumb and submissive as their own cattle. The Duke extracted his dues from every ounce of bread and every pinch of salt. The State was in process of being sucked dry.

The Estensi had been the lords of small territories in far-off Carolingian days. Bold, yet wary; astute, yet upright in conduct, as uprightness was then counted, they had achieved a rich dukedom and considerable prestige. The same blood flowed in their veins as in the princely lines of Hanover and Brunswick and in our own latest dynasty, for they were blood relations of the great house of Guelph. The bastard had ruled if he was the strongest man. Of late the Estensi had taken to scholarship. In the old days when men seized the cities of Italy by the red hand and made themselves thrones which they could only keep by craft and cunning, they were wont to pick out men of brains for confidants and counsellors. If they were forced to legitimatise their position by the administration of even justice, they loved to emphasise it by the renown of attracting genius to their courts. The parvenu ruler became the patron of learning and art, and he made his court brilliant with all the talent he could allure. This rivalry with older and semi-feudal courts led these to angle for illustrious servitors also. Ferrara became a

refuge for learning, and soon it bore the palm for brilliancy. Long ago its fame had stretched beyond the Persian Gulf, and Indian princes had sent presents to the Duke of Ferrara, in the belief that he was Sovereign of all Italy. The tradition of splendour still survived, and Alfonso II., the reigning Duke of Ferrara, maintained the brilliant reputation of his house. He was always looking out for men of genius, and endeavouring to press them into his service. When he secured them he was careful to keep them to himself, lest they should add lustre to other princes, and especially lest they should be attracted to the rival court of Florence, where those upstarts, the Medici, held sway. He was ready to find places for all men of letters, and he employed them in matters of State. But, partly to prevent the transmission of State secrets, and partly through jealousy, they might not pass into other service without his special permission.

Like all the men of his race, he really loved letters; like them, too, he was a warrior. His mother, Renée of France, who would have ascended the throne had the Salic law not excluded her, had filled him with the notions of chivalry, and in 1552, instigated by the agents of the French king, he escaped to that country when he was supposed merely to have gone a-hunting. Poor Ercole, his father, went nearly mad with vexation; he did not know what complications might follow, and he wrote at once to the Emperor, the French king's successful rival, promising to be a Roman father to his son. Alfonso proved to be a fine soldier, and distinguished himself in the wars between the rival powers. Just before the death of his father he married Lucrezia, a daughter of the rival

LUCREZIA DE' MEDICI, FIRST WIFE OF ALPHONSO II

ANGELO BRONZINO. *UFFIZI*

house of Medici, but the lady was no great beauty, and soon after the marriage he left her and rode back to France. His was a disappointed life. His wives died one after another, and he had no heir—a disappointment all the more grievous that, by an old compact, his state would revert to his overlord the Pope. Indeed, as the years went on he became somewhat stern and sour. He was liberal, yet thrifty, and honestly anxious not to increase taxation, which was already sufficiently high. But such an effort was quite incompatible with the luxurious court he kept to maintain prestige. He was passionately fond of music and supported the best performers in Italy, but the music fashionable at courts was of a light kind. Being a prince and a man of his age, he was something of a gallant, and he sustained his part in the fashionable diplomacy of love-making very well. At this time he was a man bursting with energy.

Torquato's patron, Cardinal Luigi, had been forced into the Church against his will, for his uncle, Cardinal Ippolito, though the alliance of the family with France barred his accession to the Papal throne, was rich, a great patron of letters and music, and possessed enormous power owing to the immense prestige he enjoyed. Such an uncle would be a splendid patron. The lad and his sisters were early deprived of a mother's care, for she was placed under lock and key, owing to her heretical leanings, and Luigi grew up into an insubordinate and wilful youth. Like his brother Alfonso, he fled to France, and he refused to enter the Church, but the wiles of his father, his brother and his uncle Ippolito proved successful, and like many another noble ecclesiastical dignitary

it. Towards the end of her days the asperities of her disposition became much softened.

The Duke's uncles dwelt in palaces hard by the Castello, and, like Cardinal Luigi, held courts of their own. Don Alfonso d'Este inhabited the Palazzo Bevilacqua. He was an old warrior still fond of gaiety, and had sons who hoped for the succession in the event of Duke Alfonso dying childless. Don Francesco dwelt in the Palazzo Schifanoia, which, being translated, signifies "Begone Dull Care". It was a Renascence structure with a beautiful doorway, and was richly adorned by the frescoes of the Ferrarese artist, Francesco Cossa. Don Francesco had also fought well in the wars between France and Spain for predominance in Italy, and he was no less noted for the worship of Venus than for that of Mars. He was a pleasure-loving old warrior, and had two daughters, both beautiful women and devoted to gaiety. The elder, Bradamante, was the wife of Count Bevilacqua; the younger, Marfisa, a widow, was even more beautiful than her sister. Marfisa was the leader of every festivity at the Ferrarese Court.

The nobility of Ferrara were very numerous, and, for the most part, of ancient lineage. Among the leading families were the Ariosti, to which the poet Ludovico had belonged, the Bentivogli, who claimed descent from King Enzio, the natural son of the great Emperor Frederick II. whom Matthew Paris called the wonder of the world. There were the Bendidei, the Contrari, the Guarini, sprung from Guarino da Verona, the great humanist, the Romei, that numbered among them Annibale Romei, the imitator of Castiglione, who wrote dis-

courses on love and honour, the Trotti, the Varani, who had once ruled Camerini, and a host of other important families besides. They lived on the proceeds of their estates, adorned the court, devoted themselves to pleasure and the observances of precedence and court etiquette, and were no better than splendid parasites on the resources of the State. They did not count in politics, and they imitated the fawning courtiers who shone with a reflected splendour at the courts of the monarchs of Spain and the countries beyond the Alps. The manners of the Spanish court, copied by the Viceroyalty of Naples, were imitated by the descendants of ancient houses who, for title, prestige and dignity, submitted to the rule of petty potentates and rejoiced to hang on their sleeves.

The Duke's ministers were all men of high intellectual distinction. Chief among them was Gianbattista Pigna, a man who had risen from nothing by sheer force of character. He was astute but not always prudent, learned but not always wise. He knew how to gather a distinguished circle round him, and his house was quite a literary academy. He was an envious person, and by his intrigues he had expelled Cinthio, the novelist (Shakespeare's Cinthio), who had been the Duke's secretary, from Ferrara. Pigna found time amid the cares of State to become a novelist himself; he also prided himself on his skill as a poet; but, above all, he was an historian. He was busy raking for the scattered bones of antiquity, and was preparing a history of the great house he served.

Next in importance among the ministers was Antonio Montecatini, who became Prime Minister on Pigna's

death. Montecatini was not such an all-round man as Pigna, but he was highly considered as an authority on the Aristotelian philosophy, and secured the admiration of all Italy by sustaining a thousand and ninety theses against all-comers in a discussion which lasted three days. He was a crafty, able diplomatist, and has been blamed by posterity for intriguing to hand the State over to the Pope on Alfonso's death. But he gained the gratitude of the people who were ruined by the taxation necessary to support an extravagant court and harassed by the bloody game laws of the Duke. The Ferrarese called him the Father of his country.

Then there was Battista Guarini, a man seven years older than Torquato, whom he survived eighteen years. Guarini was a man of fine imagination and great culture who renounced the leisured ease that his wealth might have bestowed, partly because he was fascinated by the glitter of the court, partly from a sense of duty to his country. He had made friends with Tasso before the latter arrived at Ferrara, for he, also, was one of the Paduan "Ethereals". Alfonso employed him on delicate missions as ambassador to various courts, and these services nearly exhausted his private fortune and burdened him with debt. His acumen detected the growing power of the House of Savoy, and he was confident that therein lay the salvation of Italy. Guarini was a dignified gentleman of philosophic calmness of spirit, and he saw very clearly into the disease of his times. "The court is a dead institution," he wrote; "it is a shadow not a substance in Italy to-day. Ours is an age of appearances, and we go a-masquerading." Alfonso made him court-

poet as successor to Tasso, and he tells us how ill he liked the position: "I strove to transform myself into an alien person, and, like a mime, forced myself into the tone of mind, costume and feelings of my youth. I was a man and I compelled myself to look young; I forced my natural melancholy away and assumed a gaiety that was artificial; I affected loves I did not feel, abandoned wisdom to play the fool, and, in a word, passed from the philosopher into the poet." But Guarini was endowed with a true poetic gift. Inspired by the success of a pastoral drama, the "Aminta," that Tasso produced, he wrote that famous poem, "Il Pastor Fido," full of careful portraiture and lyrical perfection, but also with an affectation of purest sentiment that is really what it is intended to be, mere provocative allurement. A cunning veil of sentiment is thrown over sensuous nudity.

Then there were various ambassadors liable to be sent on secret missions, Palla Strozzi, the captain of the cavalry, and a host of poets and literati hanging on the sleeve of the Duke or the other members of his House, but not all of them held office. Such was the society of the Ferrarese court, a society the like of which Tasso had known before when he was a lad at Urbino.

The Cardinal's court was held in the ducal Castello, but was quite separate and independent. He had a majordomo, a secretary, paymaster, chaplain, chancellor, cupbearer, superintendent of the household, his old tutor and nine gentlemen-in-waiting. All these were considered necessary to his rank though his income was small. The courts introduced a false conception of dignity into Italian life, of which the relics are still visible, especially at

Naples, where noble families too poor to maintain a carriage of their own have one in common and change the panels according to the party it contains so that it may bear their heraldic arms! Tasso had no fixed office and obtained no fixed salary. He received presents of thirty scudi at a time, barely sufficient to pay for the fine clothes he wore, for dress was much thought of in court, and Tasso was very particular about the black velvet which, following the Spanish fashion, he always wore. He was allowed a servant, and bread, wine and tallow candles, so that there must have been very little of the thirty scudi left for him to live upon—a rather unfortunate matter for an adolescent. But in time, at the intercession of the Princess Lucrezia, he was admitted to the Cardinal's tables, with a fixed allowance of four scudi a month (Count Tassoni, the major-domo, only received ten scudi!). This was very little for a gentleman-poet of expensive tastes and not too well acquainted with the value of money. Abram the Jew often had the keeping of his gay garments.

The gentlemen of the courts of Italy did not dwell in such sumptuously furnished apartments as the mercantile classes of Venice. Tasso was provided with a wooden bedstead with two mattresses, one being of straw, two sheets and a coverlet, a superior kind of chair, a straw-bottomed chair and a table. If he wanted greater luxury he had to provide it himself. There was a magnificent ducal library to which he would have full access. It was full of the literature he loved best and that was most useful to his purpose, such as old romances—tales of love and derring-do.

And now the Cardinal rode to Trent to fetch the Arch-

duchess of Austria. Alfonso's first wife was dead, and this second match was one that would maintain, though it could hardly augment, the grandeur of a son of the House of Este and of Renée, the eldest Princess of the House of France. Presently the bride arrived, and a vast concourse came from the great world to do her honour; there were the Duke and Duchess of Mantua and a multitude of Italian feudal lords and ladies, the great Cardinal Borromeo, who represented the Pope, and special ambassadors sent by European sovereigns and those of the Italian courts. The ingenuity of architects, sculptors and painters, the learning of historians, instructed in the costumes of ancient days, the imagination of poets were drawn upon to make the festivities worthy of the occasion and of Ferrara. The revels lasted for many days; eye-witnesses do not seem to have sufficient words at their command to express their admiration of the lovely women, sparkling in jewels and rich attire, the knightly bearing of the champions of the lists, the sumptuousness of the spectacles and the wit and ingenuity that had produced them. The bridal procession halted at the beautiful Villa of the Belvedere, outside the city; the river that flowed past glittered with a thousand craft lined and awned with cloth of gold; jewels glinted on every breast and even on the decorative hangings. The bride entered Ferrara on the 1st December, 1566, and until the eleventh day there was a whirling succession of banquets and balls and joustings and the sweet discourses of the viol. On the eleventh day the marriage was celebrated, and there was the grandest tourney that Ferrara had ever seen. It was held in an immense amphitheatre, erected for the occasion

and as magnificent as genuis could make it; it was called "The Temple of Love". Hard knocks and bloody wounds were replaced in the tourneys of the sixteenth century by the glitter of gilded casques and the waving of scarlet plumes, and the lists were kept by effigies of Venus and Leda and the nymphs and fauns and sirens of embroidery. "The city," wrote Tasso, "was a marvel, a spectacle of light and colour, displaying the movement of the stage in its endless variety of forms and shifting scenes, and then there was the clatter of so many tongues in so many diverse languages!" To have a place in such a gay throng was one of the delights enjoyed by those who sought "the sweet aspect of princes". To love the court ran in Tasso's blood; to hear about the court had been among his first impressions; court was talked at home throughout the plastic years of early boyhood; he had had a foretaste of court-joys at Pesaro and Urbino; and the court must have been a frequent subject of conversation in the quiet sympathetic hours that he and his father had spent together at Venice. The service of princes provided, not merely the gaiety so pleasant to many minds and to all men in their youth, but intellectual society, and to be a courtier not only bestowed distinction but was the road to advancement in life and afforded protection that was not to be despised. Men like Bernardo Tasso and Speroni railed against the life, but in reality they loved and sought it, and Torquato was a born courtier.

Tasso was qualified to rise rapidly at Ferrara, and though serving the Cardinal, he seems to have been made free of the ducal circle; he became the Duke's associate and the Princesses' companion. His father, meanwhile,

was perpetually passing from one end of Italy to the other on Mantuan business, and, although robust, his age made him feel the Apennine snows and keen blasts of winter very severely. Torquato bore a whole-hearted devotion to the old cavalier, and got permission to visit him at Mantua. Here he had a rather serious misadventure. He had dropped into the bad habit of reading in bed, and fell asleep with the candle still alight. Somehow it set fire to the room. Torquato saved himself by leaping from the window at the expense of a severe sprain of the ankle-joint, and his books and other things were burned, but the fire was extinguished before it did further damage. During another visit a still more serious trouble visited him. Mantua occupies a charming but insalubrious site. The Mincio spreads out its waters into three shallow lakes that lie from the north-west to the east of the city, and it soaks the land to the south into a marsh. Mantua thus occupies what is almost an island, and its battlements and towers are reflected in the still waters of the lake. But its situation, though so beautiful, is rendered unhealthy by the fens and the many waters, and Torquato fell ill of a fever which laid him by for many weeks. In a sonnet he attributes his recovery to a visit that Signora Laura paid him. He also tells us that an enfeeblement of memory, which remained with him through life, commenced with this illness; but, as he regrets his inability to recall a conversation that happened twenty years before, it is clear that the complaint was due rather to the hypersensitiveness of a *malade imaginaire*, than to any real deficiency. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Tasso burned the candle at both ends throughout his youth, and

that the anæmia and exhaustion of this attack, almost the first, if not the very first, of many visitations of ague, predisposed his already overwrought and weakened nervous system to the trouble that was to come. He intended to seek complete restoration of health by change, and resolved to go a-journeying when sufficiently recovered, but the plague was abroad and prevented him.

About this time an Academy of noblemen and scholars was opened at a private house in Ferrara by an inaugural address. This, Tasso, though so young a man, was chosen to compose and deliver, which he did in the presence of the Duke and a distinguished company. But the happiness of his life was "but the good days of an ague," and for him, as for all, triumphs and joys were short. A great sorrow fell on Torquato Tasso. The fatigues of secretaryship had become too great for Bernardo, now seventy-five years of age, and the gratitude of the Prince he served could find no better reward for his old age than the governorship of an obscure, wretched little village in the marshes of the Po. He was made Podestà of Ostilia. As might have been expected he very soon fell ill of malaria. The worn-out servant of courts had been obliged before now to lie in bed while he plied the needle and patched his only pair of breeches; probably he had never regulated his expenses well; he was in debt, his servants took advantage of his illness to rob and desert him, and his son found him obliged to calculate every item of expenditure on the barest requisites of the sick bed, down to the smallest coin. Torquato had to send to Bergamo to raise funds from relatives to cover scanty expenses. The iron pierced deep into Torquato's

GARDEN, NOW DEMOLISHED, OF THE PALAZZO DEL TAJETTO, MANTUA

GIULIO ROMANO, FRESCO, PALAZZO DEL TAJETTO

soul. Bernardo had done more than a father's part by him, and he had returned this care with very tender love; but we are all visited when it is too late by miserable memories of escaped opportunities of affection and irretrievable lapses of duty; we all receive a piercing sense of the empty silence, "the long night whose stillness brooks no star". This child of the light, gay court came to a bleak, stern, heart-breaking vigil, and he passed it in silence and alone. He had to take his share in an experience as common as it is grievous, and behold his beloved father thrust by an invisible power, heedless of prayer and tears and the vanity of struggle, through that melancholy portal that gives both access and concealment to the secret world. The devoted father had indeed a devoted son by his side in the last moments, but the accomplished courtier, the gifted poet, the confidant of princes, the agent in great affairs, had been used and cast aside by those that used him. He left his son a few small debts to pay, the Flanders tapestry and the Arab vase. Then, for one brief moment, the Prince and the world remembered; they marred the simple peace and majesty of death by a pompous procession to Mantua and obtrusive obsequies, after the custom of the time (1569).

From the stern reality of death to the frivolity of life and the gallantries of the gay court! Soon after Tasso returned to Ferrara a marriage was arranged between the Princess Lucrezia and his old playfellow, Francesco Maria della Rovere, the heir-presumptive of Urbino. The Prince had received the usual careful education of men of rank; he was well-read in the classics and furnished with all the

accomplishments of knighthood. The youthful nobility of Venice had made him a member of their fashionable club, the Calza. But his soul was that of many a punctual, methodical business-man—a man not indifferent to the pleasures of sense, not likely to prove a faithful husband, but who, when he goes to the theatre takes out his watch at the end of each act, half-bored, but thinking it the correct thing to be amused like his neighbours. He was the sort of man whom one expects to keep a diary and enter minute particulars in it. He records, for example, that a "comedy by the late Maestro Fabo Bagnano was recited in the great hall of Pesaro" (1589). "The first Act lasted an hour and ten minutes; after which came an interlude for twenty minutes from the fable of the foretelling by Tiresias of Ulysees his wanderings; then Act II., done in fifty minutes, with a musical interlude for ten minutes; then Act III., done in half an hour, with the marriage of Eolus and Deiopeia for interlude—ten minutes; then Act IV. in forty-eight minutes, and its musical interlude, seven minutes; lastly, Act V. in thirty-eight minutes, with its interlude of the gods allotting the various dominions; but this was not finished in consequence of a cloud, which, by some mismanagement, did not descend properly" (*Diary*, 1589). The entertainment had already lasted nearly five hours! Francesco Maria was a very close observer of small things; he was devoted to natural history; his diary is full of notes that remind one of Gilbert White, and though he was of a warmer complexion, and the diversions of love-making were *de rigeur* to a man of his rank, he shared the spirit of that delightful naturalist in no small measure, and was never so happy as when

making minute observations. He was now twenty-one, more than four years younger than Tasso, and was condemned to marry a woman fifteen years his senior. He tells us in his diary that the wedding "was little to his taste, for the lady was old enough to be his mother". The Prince came to Ferrara for the nuptials, and there ensued the usual exhibition of make-believe chivalry and pompous festivities. All the court dependants were busy, sharpening pens and spilling ink, to celebrate this love-match in undying verse. It behoved our poet to surpass them. He nailed up a placard of "Fifty Conclusions of Love," and challenged the world to dispute them at the Academy of Ferrara. Such "Courts of Love" were fashionable; they were revivals of an old Provençal custom; and the entire court came and listened to the entertainment for three days, appearing the last day in masquerade. Tasso tells us that it was like a theatre, and the applause of courteous knights and fair ladies was great. "Who," he says, "could overcome an enamoured poet, and with what arms could he vanquish him, his lady herself sitting by, from whom he could easily receive the victory in each duel?" The lady was probably Lucrezia Bendidio, to whom, in spite of all that he had written, he still professed the courtly service of love. Twenty years later, after much suffering and in melancholy years, he thought it worth while to reproduce the dialogues in "Il Cataneo". Of course the work is in the artificial High-Platonic style of the period. The last of Tasso's fifty theses was that the love of man is deeper and more enduring than that of woman. His most redoubtable opponent was Signora Orsina Bertolaia Cavaletti, a hand-

some, highly educated woman, herself a poetess. She adventured the superiority of her sex, and, in truth, bore off the colours. She was as full of eloquence as of charm; she smote and spared not, and probably had the advantage over poor Tasso of being quite free from impediment in her speech.

Throughout his life, Tasso, like all the men of his time, was engaged in battering himself into sentimentality. The complete gentleman of those days was always the servitor of some lady, whom he worshipped from afar, for the lady was never by any chance his wife. Tasso invested this curious sentiment with all the glow of his rich imagination and the magic of his liquid verse. To attach oneself to some lady, in the respectful service of love, was a fashion, but a fashion of serious significance to all the men of the time; it had a remarkable history, and its roots were planted in human needs.

In the eleventh century the Provençals, though inferior in refinement and the arts to the Arabs, were the most highly civilised people in the Christian world. Nearest to Rome in polish and urbanity, Provence, after the fall of the Empire, was the least disturbed by foreign invasion of all her subject lands. The south of France preserved some trace of ancient culture; it maintained trade with the Orient and the Moors of Spain and Barbary that gave wealth to the cities and feudal courts and kept them from being wholly submerged in the barbarism of the age. Wandering minstrels visited the castles and were welcomed by their fair ladies to while away the tedious hour. Men, lowly in rank, but bearing some spark of divine fire in their breast, took up and ennobled the profession of

troubadour, and they were soon followed by those of higher rank. The sons of the people were rivalled in song by the scions of the aristocracy, but here was a contest in which genius, not rank, triumphed, and many a low-born vassal was sought after by gracious châtelaines to sing in their halls; such an one became the companion of the great, and was granted a brevet-equality with them. Now the noble lady was wedded at an early age, often to some elderly baron; nor was her consent asked. The union was arranged for reasons of family policy, or dictated by some feudal guardian, but the married lady was allowed no small measure of freedom; Roman usage had granted it, and independence was the tradition and ran in the blood of the Teutonic women that, ofttimes, had been her forebears. It was natural, being human, that the songs she bent her mind to hear were those that told of love; nor was she altogether displeased if her own charms were hinted at in the chanson of the troubadour. He, accustomed for the most part to women disfigured by the coarse labours of his class, often had his imagination excited by the easy grace and condescension of the cultivated lady, whose superior beauty was enhanced by the silks and pearls of the Orient; and, if he always strove to flatter her vanity, not seldom he fell a victim to her fascination. The situation was dangerous but delightful. Under careful disguises the poet manifested his own emotion, and so gave birth to the literature of romantic love. As Quinet observes, his sentiments were those that would have been repugnant to antiquity, for now it is woman who commands and man becomes her slave. The wave of a new poetry passed from

Provence into Italy, bearing with it a new doctrine, that of the unrequited service of woman, that merely to love is its own exceeding great reward. The followers of the "Angelic Doctor," the erudite scholars of the new universities, converted it into a philosophical theory. Guido Guinicelli, Guido Cavalcanti, Dante Alighieri and others, aided by the prevailing assurance that symbols bear their own validity, and are no other than revelations to the discerning eye, developed the same feeling and tendency that was exhibited of old by Plato. They sublimated earthly passion; they beheld it concealing divine secrets and laden with the reticent mysteries of God. But, after Dante, mysticism rapidly disappeared. The verse of Petrarch needs no commentator; it is full of sensuous fervour, and becomes more musical and free. The Italian maiden remained an *ingénue*, to whom one rarely spoke, and whom, if spoken to, one always found destitute of material for conversation. The chief serious amusement of cultivated and courtly circles was to philander with the married ladies, and assume great devotion. The lover felt or affected a mystic union with the being of his heart, and he derived from contemplating her perfection, not merely ecstasy, but an elevation of soul that only refined natures could experience. There was in this cult of womanhood genuine impulse and a virile sense of the physical delicacy and dainty superiority of a being perfect by reason of the absence of those qualities wherein the man was strong. The force of passion, obstructed from pursuing its spontaneous drift, expended itself in unnatural and fantastic ways. The service of love soon became a perfunctory artifice, an indispensable qualification of the complete

courtier. Devotion to a lady had its rules. In Venice, if a man did not declare his love within six months he passed for a ninny; while serving a mistress the courting of another woman was disallowed; he might not vaunt of any favour she bestowed, and, if seen lingering about her palace the offence was so heinous that it was "a pity such a fellow could not be burned". The fashion was to dally with sentiment, to strive for high-flying ideas, to outpour an intolerable quantity of soft sensibility in affected verse. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that all was affectation. The sentiment was often still really felt and genuinely credited. Servitors, though, in theory at least, they might not shrive their passion, often caught glimpses of strange celestial glories; they saw, far off, the haven of the heart's desire. The service of love was, for many, the pathway to higher realities than the visible heavens, even to that secret empyrean that the glassy firmament hides, and that stars hint at but never disclose. But "curiously compounded clay" has a strange faculty of segregating ideas and dissociating conduct from belief. These lofty, heavenward flights were not incompatible with mere earthly concupiscence. And we feel ourselves on the threshold of that strange Italian institution, the cicisbeatura. There was to come a time when the young married woman was "a novice" until she had a licensed favourite, a second who aspired, and a third who was only allowed to suffer; a time when Christian doctrine and the prejudices of property and tradition alone prevented men from the wise course of tracing their descent solely on the spindle-side. The transition from the courtly service of love to the cicisbeatura was aided by Spanish influence, which was,

at this period, predominant. Provençal habits and ideals had penetrated through Catalonia into Spain. It became a fixed habit for the Spanish warrior, when called away to war or the council, to leave his lady in the care of some caballero, usually an intimate friend. By this time every noble or wealthy dame went about accompanied by a caballero, not her husband, whose arm she took and who was therefore called the "bracciere". In fact the husband

> Thought it prudent to connect her
> With a vice-husband, chiefly to protect her.

The habit took its place in the punctilious code of Spanish honour, and reinforced, while it modified, the courtly service of love in Italy; for both indeed were derived from the same Provençal source. Strangely enough, at the inception of romantic love in the south of France, an analogous sentiment was expressing itself in Arab literature; and in a score of delicate ways certain strands of oriental feeling with regard to woman were infused, by commercial intercourse or that attendant on war, into the Christian mind. The sixteenth century preserved the form, though it had well-nigh lost the true spirit, of the chivalric worship of woman: hardly more than the etiquette of love's service remained, and there are signs enough that the coming cicisbeatura is at hand. But Tasso sincerely believed in doctrines that Petrarch sang and that linked themselves with the philosophisings of Plato.

From the first the Princesses conceived a genuine liking for Tasso. They delighted in his verses, commanded his attendance, and were indefatigable in trying to push his fortunes. This feeling towards him, very likely, was much the same as what a slightly faded virgin of social distinc-

tion is wont to exhibit towards a pet curate, young, good-looking, accomplished and well-bred. She admires his talents, adores his sermons, and mingles a little sentiment (slightly maternal and a trifle philandering) with undisguised and whole-hearted enthusiasm for himself. Tasso manifested his appreciation of this intercourse in a torrent of verse. Did Madama Lucrezia finish a piece of tambour work? there was a sonnet; did Madama Leonora suffer from sore eyes? there was a sympathetic lament. These verses were facile, fresh and delightful, for they were written, not as a duty, to order, but because the poet could not help himself: they welled up from his heart. At some time Tasso wrote verses that he did not wish to see the light; we read how he wished certain compositions "made for a friend" to "rest buried with him" in the event of his death. The friend may or may not have been a pretext. When mental disease fell on Tasso, he frequently alleged that his papers had been tampered with, and became frantically anxious concerning them. The imaginative mind is susceptible, and readily moved to vain fancies; the poet's flights are not invariably consecrated dreams; often they bear no other reality than their own nebulous being, and such imaginations are apt to form like the mists, and like the mists they disperse and are forgotten; occasionally they spring from some core of self that their author would fain keep hidden from the world. There may have been erotic suggestions passing through Tasso's mind of which he disburdened himself on paper. That he was anxious concerning the fate of some of his private papers is all that we certainly know. No court of law would listen for a moment to the sort of evidence that

has been adduced to prove real love-relations between Tasso and one or both of the ladies of the House of Este. There are some critics who are nothing if not ingenious, but the reconstruction of a poet's life from the internal evidence of his works, from his will, or even from his letters, if he had an eye on their publication, is a doubtful experiment. Often these free imaginations are so vain that they have scarcely a right to exist, even in the capacity of private surmise. The ladies belonged to the proudest house in Italy, and great Italian houses had developed a jealous code of honour in the sixteenth century, the violation of which was dangerous alike to the lover and the lady; the Princesses were no longer in their first youth, they were much older than Tasso, and the bloom of beauty is a transient thing in Italy. Let us admit that such accidents are neither vital impediments to love nor insuperable barriers to ambition. We shall presently come to a case in point. But Tasso was the last man to risk all for love. And in the name of all the verities, before we rear a palace of probabilities, let us look to our foundations a little; let us examine the bed-rock of fact as far as we are able; let us cease to make conjectural reconstructions from supposititious allusions in poems and pieces, and turn ourselves in a saner, more scientific spirit to the search for quite undeniable objective facts. There is a plethora of documentary evidence, much of it disinterred by the labours of Solerti and others from dusty and forgotten archives. There are plenty of apothecaries' prescriptions and all kinds of evidence to show that real and not feigned madness fell upon Tasso; there is documentary evidence that is destructive of all the romantic theories concerning

him. That the ladies of Este excited much liveliness of fancy in the poet is true: he surrounded them with visionary enchantment in order to record them in magnificent verse. But there is not a jot of evidence that there was at any time anything but sincere friendly admiration frankly expressed by both sides in the face of everybody, and this in spite of all those subtle allurements and delicate disguisals that are inevitably, however unconsciously, present in any companionship of the sexes. There is more than one Tasso myth, and later we shall have to trace the growth of the various legends concerning him.

Charles IX., the French King, was to be married in the autumn of 1570 to Elizabeth of Austria. The ducal house of Este was closely related to the royal blood of France, and Cardinal Luigi, who held the Archbishopric of Auch and several abbeys in France, intended to be present at the wedding. His suite, including Tasso, set out for Paris, the Cardinal intending to join them later. Foreign and even domestic travel was no light undertaking in those days, and Tasso left a will behind him. It is a very human document; it exhibits an author's solicitude for the offspring of his brains, our poet's sincere filial piety, his thriftlessness, and it contains a mysterious reference to certain verses, which he professes to have "made for a friend". "Because life is uncertain," so it runs, "if it please God to dispose of me otherwise on my journey to France, I beseech the Signore Ercole Rondinelli to take charge of some of my effects; and first, as regards my compositions, that he should collect and publish my own love sonnets and my madrigals. But I desire that the rest, which I have made in the service of

a friend, should rest buried with myself, except the one that begins 'or che l'aura mia dolce altrove spira'. I should wish the oration which I made for the opening of the Ferrarese Academy to see the light; also my four books on Heroic Poetry. Of my 'Goffredo'" (so he then called the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, at which he had been working very hard, and which he was now busy polishing) "the last six cantos and those stanzas of the two first cantos which shall be judged least imperfect, if they be first reviewed and considered by Signore Scipio Gonzaga, Signore Domenico Veniero and Signore Battista Guarini, who for the friendship and servitude I have with them will not, I am persuaded, refuse to undertake this labour. I wish them also to know that I desire them to cut out with an unsparing hand all that they may deem to be inferior or superfluous. But, in adding or changing, their caution should be the greater that the poem cannot appear except in an imperfect condition. If, of my other compositions, aught should appear to Signore Rondinello, and the Signori I have named, not unworthy of seeing the light, I leave it to their judgment to dispose of them. Those belongings of mine which are in pawn with Abram for 25 lire, and seven pieces of tapestry which Signor Asconio holds for 13 scudi, and those in this house, I desire to be sold, and with the money that remains let an epitaph be made for my father whose body lies in St. Paul's. . . . And if any difficulty should arise as to this, Signore Ercole shall have recourse to the most excellent Madama Leonora, who, for my love, will be liberal. I, Torquato Tasso, have written this. Ferrara, A.D. 1570."

Tasso and his companions set out from Ferrara on

11th October, and in nearly a month they contrived to reach Paris. They rode through Modena and Pavia to Susa, where they carried their provisions to a monastery and put up there, possibly because there was no inn in the place. Then they crossed the Mont Cenis, and journeyed to the valley of the Allier; they followed the course of its pleasant waters to where it joins the Loire; they rode by the banks of the great river, swelling now with the autumn rains, through the vineyards and cornlands of the "Bon Pays," getting glimpses of ancient chateaux and distant forests of oak and beech, hornbeam and elm, and resting at queer timbered inns in unpaved, unlighted towns. They broke away from the river to reach Montargis, traversed the thick woods of Fontainebleau, and finally reached Paris, where they took up a temporary abode in the Quartier Latin. During his stay in Paris Tasso dwelt chiefly with one Jacopo Corbinelli, a scholar, with whom he made friends, but he spent the greater part of his time in France at the Abbey of Châlis. The Cardinal was detained for some while by a terrible earthquake that visited Ferrara, and that was followed by serious inundations of the Po. For more than a month the court had to camp out in the higher fields. The courtly poets poured forth verses that ascribed the deliverance of the land from these perils to the Princess Leonora, who was regarded as a saint, partly because she had made herself beloved when she was put in charge of the state, partly because she was very devout and led the quiet, secluded life of an invalid.

Manso was always ready to draw largely on his imagination to magnify his hero, and his account of Tasso's

stay in France is now entirely discredited. Tasso had as yet produced neither the *Aminta* nor the *Gerusalemme Liberata;* and though the French were copying the Italians in manners and in letters, his reputation in his own country was hardly established, and no great blast of his fame could have reached France. He did not see the Queen at all; he was lodged at the Abbey during the greater part of his stay, and could have seen the King but seldom, and the Sieur de Montaigne, whom we think the greatest of the French literati of that age, was dwelling in the retirement of his little estate in the country near Bordeaux.

But during the short stay in Paris Tasso made the acquaintance of a band of scholars who were endeavouring to do the same service for France that the Academies aimed at in Italy. These were the survivors of the famous Pléaides, whereof Ronsard, the poet, was the most particular star. They copied Petrarch, Ariosto, Bembo and Sannazaro; they were closely connected with the French court, and their verses are full of the spirit of genteel flattery. The Pléaides have been accused of devoting their main energies to Frenchifying the Latin dictionary, but they were earnest men who, in spite of extravagance, really succeeded in enriching their language and improving it as a clear and precise medium of communication. They followed Italian methods closely, for the scholarship of the Renascence appeared in France a century later than south of the Alps. Ronsard was twenty years older than Tasso, but they had this together in common, that both were masters of amatory verse; both delighted in magnificent imaginations; both pos-

sessed winning grace; both indulged in voluptuous melancholy. Tasso somewhere compares a sonnet of Ronsard's in honour of the House of Valois to the famous "Come to the shade of the great golden lilies" of Caro, and gives the palm for conception and sublimity to his French friend. Besides Ronsard there was a crowd of minor poets whom he would meet, some of them writing with the sunny tenderness of our cavalier poets; some with a stately solemnity that John Milton copied. He may have met Brantôme, but Brantôme had not yet begun to write. There were, however, playwrights that worked on Italian models to be known, and a host of authors of memoirs, who exhibited high quality and were inaugurating a species of literature in which France remains unequalled and indeed unapproached.

Tasso was not very much taken by the "plaisant pays". He disliked the wines, which seemed to him to be all of one taste. However, he compares Paris with Venice! but thinks the latter the more marvellous city. French towns he found vastly inferior to Italian, being built mostly of wood, tasteless (he had no feeling for Gothic) and without plan; the houses dark and deficient in accommodation, and the staircases continually twining and twisting so as to make the head swim. He was struck by the vast number of magnificent churches, but he found their architecture a trifle barbarous and wanting in the graceful elegance of more modern buildings; the church furniture, too, was poor; he missed the pictures and statues of Italy. The country he thought monotonous, the people degraded, which he attributes to their living on such a wearisome, uniform plain; the nobles he allows to be warlike

by reason of their training; he is surprised to find them living retired in their castles, and abandoning letters and learning to the vulgar "which is as if to wed a queen to a peasant, whereby philosophy loses much of its natural grace, and from a free inquirer into the nature of things becomes dull and powerless, and from a royal lady, ruling the minds of men, is degraded into the service of sordid crafts and the hankering for gain. Plato observed this of old time in his *Republic*, and from experience I know that his reasonings are well founded."

Tasso expressed these conclusions with much modesty and diffidence; he thinks, for example, that his palate and not the wines of the country may have been at fault; but on one point he is very emphatic; he had formed but a very poor opinion of the French nobility, and he does not hesitate to accuse them of witless arrogance, which is the undesirable result of country seclusion and having no one but serfs to deal with. To a polished Italian courtier the manners of the French nobility and even of Royalty itself must have seemed very barbarous. An Italian ambassador, writing to his prince, concerning the very marriage of the King which had drawn Cardinal d'Este to France, speaks of Monsignore de Guise having wounded himself in mistake for the pig at a boar-hunt and being confined to his bed, whereupon Charles sought to amuse him by getting up a snow tournament, for the snow was lying thickly on the ground. A barrier was erected, and King and court delighted the Duke by storming and defending it; getting excited they used ordure (of which there was doubtless a sufficient supply at hand), and finally stones of from three to four pounds

in weight. The King was the first to be wounded; he got a bloody nose; finally everybody around took part in the fray, and the Duke had to be held down in his bed by Charles to prevent him, wounded as he was, from leaping out of it and joining in. Following this a German acrobat turned somersaults; then the court adjourned to fives, and the day's entertainment concluded with a dance, whereat, as one might suppose, men and women alike presented no very elegant appearance.

The Cardinal was invited to accompany the King and Queen on a progress to Brittany. His means were small, his expenses had been great, and he had overrun the constable. Luigi d'Este sent his suite back to Italy, and Tasso seized the opportunity to release himself from his service. The real reasons for this step do not lie on the surface: we hear much of the parsimony of the Cardinal, and, during the time of his madness, Tasso spoke of his attempts to pervert his faith. But it was Tasso's misfortune that he was prone to get dissatisfied with everybody and everything; he never could make terms with his surroundings, and was perpetually wanting to be on the wing. He threw up a position that was an excellent one for so young a man. Tasso was sensitive and vain. He dwelt in dreamland and forgot, or never knew, the true proportion of things. He confesses to desiring the admiring notice of everybody; he was apt to construe preoccupation in a patron into a hint that he was not wanted, or even into an insult, and he tells us quite frankly that he hated to dwell where nobles did not grant him precedence, or at the very least, complete equality. In fact he was of opinion that his descent

made him the equal, and his endowments the superior of all men. His position in the Cardinal's service was irregular and exceptional, and perhaps his co-servitors were jealous of him. But he had no quick insight into other folk's feelings, no practical judgment or adaptability. In a word he was destitute of tact. His sensibilities and emotions were highly developed; his interest in great impersonal themes remained relatively small. Such people become more and more self-centred; they view social relations solely in reference to themselves. Love of approbation, distinction, fame, fasten the man tighter to the core of self. Let him be possessed of divine tenderness, let him traverse the wide range of feeling, still, all his noblest qualities are linked to the strongest of his interests, the interest with which he regards his own welfare. In his survey of the universe his private and particular personality comes to occupy larger and larger space, and *that* way there is always peril, *that* way madness lies. "Self-unconsciousness is a test of health."

CHAPTER VI

ROME

Visit to Rome—Roman Life—Music—Palestrina—St. Filippo Neri—Learned Men—The Villa d'Este—In Villegiatura with the Princess Lucrezia—The Battle of Lepanto

SO Tasso returned to Ferrara, bearing a letter from the Cardinal to the Duke and messages by word of mouth. There is a legend that he wore the same coat as when he set forth for France, and certainly his finances were not improved. If he hoped to be received at once into the ducal service he was disappointed. In a month he became disgusted with Ferrara and set off for Rome, where he hoped for great things from his father's friend and patron, the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, uncle of the Duke (May, 1571).

It was a new Rome that Tasso saw, so far as sprinklings of holy water could cleanse that Augean stable. Conduct had become, if not more chaste, vastly more cautious, and thought was as submissive to His Holiness as the gelding he rode. Michele Ghislieri, Pius V., had diligently employed his youth in the devout duties of the Inquisition and other means of grace. He was a fanatic who had one single policy—to enforce his own supremacy by suppressing all religious discussion and compelling strict discipline in the Church. For, what was left to the Catho-

lic empire required consolidation. He had just excommunicated our own Elizabeth and released her subjects from their "most debased servitude" to that "wanton woman". But his own metropolitan city had to be dealt with. It was an easy matter to issue Bulls, to condemn heretics, to enforce the recitation of canonical hours. It was a harder matter to cleanse that ancient sink of iniquity, where for ages popes and prelates had set the example of pollution to the Church, and committed adulteries of which "they were not ashamed neither would they blush". The kingdom of God was defiled; His vicars stank in the nostrils of the nations with all detestable and abominable things. Two generations ago four or five murdered men were to be found lying dead in the streets every night; bodies were fished for in the Tiber; bishops were among these victims of disorder; men hinted at the secret practices of the Vatican, and all Rome trembled for fear of the silent dagger of the Pope's son. Even now, brigands, the descendants of foreign and native condottieri, lurked among the ruins, and haunted the causeways that led to Rome; the "sbirri" of the Pope were powerless against the bravi of the young nobles, and, at best, when the police mustered strong enough to seize some miscreant, he was probably under the protection of a Roman baron, and there was danger of fierce battle before they could get him away. The Roman rabble, demoralised from the days of "panem et circenses," were rough and wild, and sometimes surged through the streets like demons; they bore lurid torches, horrid curses were hurled from their deep chests, and the rush had murder for its object. Worse than the rabble, even, were the

scions of the great houses, the younger Colonna, the Orsini, the Savelli, ever ready to turn out with their bravi in defence of the privileges of their order; their castles, inviolable as the sanctuary of God, were filled with ruffians, the streets were made horrid at night by their insolent perambulations, and wanton cruelties bore witness to their untamed barbarity. The ladies of the house had to remain secluded in the upper suites of the palace; their very food had to be passed into their rooms on a turnstile, for fear of the bravi below that their husbands and brothers maintained.

Even in public the sexes did not commingle. The ladies of the barons' household were wont to be driven slowly up and down the Corso. For carriages, still almost unknown north of the Alps, were used in Italy, and were provided with reflecting glasses that the occupants might view the world to better advantage. And cavalcades of gallants ambled past to get glimpses of a fair face that might be coyly unmasked for a moment; or sometimes the gallants even condescended to saunter (for your true Roman never walks); and then they were ogled by beauties of coarser mould, that sat decked in tawdry finery at the windows of innumerable brothels, where they exercised all their arts to allure the passer-by. The streets, narrow, tortuous and mediæval, were crowded by foreigners, and the confusion of tongues was as that of the plain of Shinar. There was less, indeed, of Northern speech to be heard in Rome since the Reformation, but the Spaniard might fancy himself in Spain, the Frenchman in France. There was an abundance of hostelries, whereof the Golden Cup was the best, being furnished with silk and cloth of

gold. Next best, but more comfortable, was the Bear (which still stands at the corner of the Via d'Orso). On his way to Rome the pilgrim, the Romeo as he was called, if he was fortunate enough to escape the attention of the brigands, was still persecuted by rival innkeepers that rode on horseback to meet him and solicit his custom, while their drawers, in their bravest attire, followed him up on his way. Montaigne tells of one who, as a last expedient to tempt him to his master's house, offered him a hare.

There were many Jews in the streets. One knew them, if not by the physiognomy, by the long gaberdine and the yellow cap prescribed by law (unless they were physicians). This unhappy race had crowded into the city from all parts of the Papal dominions, for they were forbidden to dwell elsewhere than in the Metropolis and the Papal port of Ancona. They were forced to run in the carnival races with asses and buffaloes, scrambling along as nimbly as they could to make the holiday of a jeering crowd; and, on certain occasions, a fixed number of them were compelled to present themselves at Sunday service. This submissive people shrugged their shoulders and kissed the rod, for where had they to go where they would be better treated? and did they not pursue their national occupation with profit, lending moneys to a thriftless generation and battening on the extravagance of a luxurious and splendour-loving aristocracy? Great ladies, too, visited their quarters by stealth. For the Jew was renowned for all manner of witchcraft and power of divination, and, being already damned in virtue of his inexpugnable faith, his soul was of no account, so he was exempt from the Inquisition and the more serious forms of religious perse-

cution. He plied such craft privily, with no great risk, for he and his client naturally kept their own counsel. But the client did not visit him without hazard. For sixteen hundred years, since those memorable days of liberty when the Jews of Rome mourned the great Julius, who deserved their loves, and kept his funeral pyre in the Forum burning for seven days and seven nights, they had dwelt hard by the Theatre of Marcellus, now become the fortress of the Orsini; and here the Popes placed them under lock and key after sunset—to their great advantage in the insecurity of a Roman night. It was a narrow quarter, more crowded and intricate than the China-town of San Francisco—a poor thing and ill-favoured, but their own. Hither came the great ladies in secret.

At carnival time there was not merely the baiting of the Jew to amuse the populace, but the nobles, finely mounted, tilted at the quintain, and the ladies, clad in sumptuous cloth of gold and silver, set with pearls and precious jewels, unmasked and showed how peril dwelt in smile and dimple as well as in the eye. And another excitement was the frequent death of a Cardinal (for the Cardinals were for the most part aged men) and the sale of his effects. Then all the fashionable world would be eager to purchase his swandown counterpane or swanskin coverlet, or the *objets de vertu* he had collected—his jewels cut in rare devices and his caskets inlaid with little mirrors to multiply the lustre of the gems.

Then there was a new pasquinade to see almost every morning. For the Romans had their comic, satiric journal still going. At the corner of the Palazzo Orsini stood a torso, the mutilated remains of some antique

statue. Hereon, in the night, political squibs were pasted; and clever, biting jests they usually were. Hard by there had lived an old cobbler, named Pasquino; his ready, rasping tongue was much appreciated by his fellow-citizens, and they dubbed the torso after him. Pasquino was a safety-valve for political discontent, of which there was plenty in Rome, and its splutterings gave vent to the natural impatience of a people disorderly by blood and tradition, but, like most Southerners, readily turned aside if allowed to laugh at their masters, and satisfied with the explosion of a clever squib. That dour Dutchman, Adrian VI., like many another prominent man in Rome, waxed very wroth at the jibes and lampoons that decorated Pasquino, and threatened to throw him into the Tiber. "Do so," was the reply, "and he will infect the waters and penetrate the very frogs. They will croak pasquinades in chorus." In the Monti stood another fragment of antiquity, supposed to have represented a river god. Marforio, as it was called, was in the habit of putting leading questions to which Pasquino replied, and the pair were usually in animated conversation and exchanged bitter jests, so good that a collection of them was printed.

And a stronger excitement was to be had pretty frequently—the entertainment of seeing a malefactor perish. There would be a procession to the place of death, of men only, including many of the highest born of Rome, their visage disguised by black masks, their form by black cloth mantles. They accompanied the living man and bore away his dead body. Before them a crucifix was carried; it also was draped in black. Behind followed the condemned, with monks exhorting him; these repeatedly

held a picture of the Saviour to his lip, and veiled his face with it when he died; for this degenerate Roman might not have his features seen in his last agony, and they were covered, even as his sires had been wont to cover themselves with their toga, when the dread hour came. Then the black figures came forward and raised the body and bore it away, while a Jesuit, or a father of some other earnest order, would mount the scaffold and harangue the people on their sins. The condemned man was usually put to death by strangulation, and then the body was quartered, whereat the people that had hitherto gazed unmoved were deeply agitated, for the artistic Italian nature that thought little of murder had a horror of mutilation—a prejudice which it still retains. But the excitement of horror reached its acme when authority had been directly outraged and avenged itself, as when a master had been murdered or some other act of great or petty treason committed. The perpetrator of such a crime was first torn by pincers and his hands cut off; the executioner's assistants immediately applied capons to the mutilated parts, out of some weird impenetrable motive that lies far away, veiled by the cryptic cycles; for Rome is the sepulchre of many civilisations that have bequeathed strange secrets to life as well as to the soil and the river bed; and other tokens than the scattered wrecks of marble recall the mysterious past. And after this, the tortured man was clubbed and his head was cut off.

When a scholar had seen the man "die in his shoes," there was the most famous library in Christendom to resort to for a quiet hour—that of the Vatican palace. Here were stored many unique and precious manuscripts

of antiquity, remnants of the fair classical world that had been brought by refugee Greeks from Constantinople, or rescued by fourteenth-century scholars from the barbarous indifference or misusage of unlettered monks. Here were books in all languages, even in Chinese, and you could open and read many a precious volume that was protected from needy or covetous students by a strong chain fixed to the desk. And there was the almost daily excitement of some new discovery, some statue, sadly broken indeed, that the trampling of more than sixty generations had buried five fathom deep. And then you could betake yourself to the dancing-school or the fencing-rooms, where the best masters in the world would teach you the latest trick of the sword or the new pirouette that was all the fashion at the Court of France. Or you could go to the riding-school, and perfect yourself in the mode of making your horse curvet so as to show the grace and skill of his rider. Or perhaps you would prefer to cross the Ponte Rotto and sit by the yellow Tiber, watching the white buffaloes of the Campagna tugging cargoes from Ostia against the stream and straining at the rope, or ascend the steep path of the Janiculum and gaze over all Rome and pick out broken hints of so many generations of departed men.

Or, heated by the foils, and grimy with the dust of the sultry town, there are the refreshing hot baths of San Marco inviting you. There you can bathe and be rubbed down. There you can admire the elegant, generous form of many a noble Roman matron or maid as she drives up to the doors, but not her face, for Roman ladies wear masks even when visiting each other. They have come

hither, with a due feminine regard for comeliness, to be relieved of superfluous hair from the temple, or that faint suspicion of a moustache that vexes so many southern women. For the bath-women are skilful in the application of their depilatories of arsenic and quicklime.

It is not every Roman who frequents the bath, though, in this sixteenth century. The antique fashion of washing went out of date many ages ago, with the cutting of the aqueducts, and is hardly yet restored to favour, for a pail of water is an expensive luxury in Rome. We are not, it is true, quite so indifferent to personal cleanliness as old Michelangelo, who used to keep his dog-skin stockings on for months, so that when he drew them off he brought the skin away with them. But we rely more on frequent change of linen than the bath, and we use perfumes!

On the road home you bethink you of your religious duties and enter one of the many churches. Seated by the altar is a youthful figure, clad in a robe of blue taffeta and wearing an olive crown. He bears a lighted candle in his hand. Being a stranger in Rome, you ask what this may signify, and are told that he is a penitent discharged from prison. Montaigne saw such an one, a mere child, that by accident or in swift wrath had killed another child, but by his Holiness' order had been released from gaol.

And you pass more than one bookseller, wheeling his booth home; for there is a vast demand for reading of all sorts, even in Rome, that least lettered of Italian cities. The trucks remind you that your friend, Aldus Manutius, the younger, is hard at work completing the results of

his study of Latin inscriptions, and that soon you may hope to see the "Epitome Orthographiæ". But you will only be able to procure that great treatise on correct spelling from his agent in whatever city you may then be, if the book is licensed there. Booths and most shops contain an assortment better suited to a less educated palate than yours; though, indeed, there are cyclopædias and classics and revisions of the Italian poets to be found there, mixed up with books on the latest fashions, books of recipes for cookery or the complexion, and all kinds of pornographic literature, disguised under deceptive titles. For the new race of scribblers that get their living by truckling to the taste of the vulgar know their public, and even when they write for the pious they are skilful in angling for other fish. Let them write a "Doctrine of Good Living" or "The Spiritual Life," and God may preserve them! But the "Pimp Exposed" or "The Whore Lost" will take with a virtuous public.

Rome was full of entertainment. There were all kinds of processions at all seasons to be witnessed there. In Lent many thousand men, belonging to a hundred different fraternities, gathered to see the impression of Our Lord's face that He left on the sacred handkerchief of St. Veronica, when she wiped the sweat from His brow. They bore, each of them, a lighted torch, and the choirs that accompanied them were wont to sing so movingly as to touch men, even as St. Augustine was touched when "the hymns and songs of praise deeply moved him as the voices flowed into his ears, and the affection of piety outpoured in sweet tears". There were still fraternities of flagellants that scourged themselves with knotted

thongs as they marched dolefully through the public streets, just as St. Peter Damien's successors had done for centuries; and pitying women offered them wine and sweatmeats to sustain the feeble body and comfort the fearful soul.

And at St. John's Lateran a great crowd was wont to assemble and say the Ave Maria, while the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul were shown. It is true that one had to peer through iron gratings, and the curtain that screened the sacred relics was withdrawn for a short time only, at the ringing of a bell. Yet it was drawn more than once at more than one hour, on the appointed day, and you might in time make out that the chief Apostle, whose head bore a mitre, had been a fair man with a forked beard, and that St. Paul was of darker complexion, with a bushy grey beard and a much larger head.

The chapels were busy from morning to night with the observances of the Sacraments and the ritual of the Church. Behaviour in the sacred edifices was far from being reverent. In spite of devotion to the forms of religion men would stand at service with their hats on and their backs to the altar, and spit. For a true Italian always holds it bad for the health to swallow one's saliva. The ceremonies of the Church were marked by much splendour, but little devoutness, except at the elevation of the Host. Then indeed there was silence and veneration. For, until the Reformation, the seen and the unseen made but one world, nor was aught peculiarly and separately sacred in God's world, save His own presence there in the flesh. Montaigne saw the Pope keep his seat throughout the Mass, and he chatted the whole time with the Cardinals, all wearing their hats.

Then there was the exorcism of devils to be seen, the officiating priest holding a candle in one hand and the Blessed Sacrament in the other. You might even see some hysteric vomit a bit of the hairy skin of the devil that possessed her, and afterwards behold her, clothed and in her right mind, exhibited at St. Peter's now to those on the right and now to those on the left of the pulpit.

More than a hundred years before, after the Popes had returned from their "Babylonian Captivity," after the yet greater wound of the Great Schism was healed, Nicholas V., convinced that sense-impressions are the matrix of belief, and fully aware of how subtle are the influences that mould the mind of man and how penetrative is the persuasion of outward show, determined "to create solid and stable convictions in the minds of the uncultivated masses". "To do this," wrote he, "there must be something that appeals to the eye: a popular faith, sustained only by doctrines, will never be anything but feeble and vacillating. But if the authority of the Holy See were visibly displayed in majestic buildings, imperishable materials, and witnesses seemingly implanted by the hand of God Himself, belief would grow and strengthen like a tradition from one generation to another, and all the world would accept and revere it. Noble edifices, combining taste and beauty with imposing proportions, would immensely conduce to the exaltation of the Chair of St. Peter." The policy thus inaugurated was ever afterwards pursued, and, especially after the sittings of the Council of Trent, the ceremonial splendour of the Papal Court received increased attention.

The Pope was wont to pass through the streets arrayed

in a red-velvet cowl surmounted by a red hat, a white robe, and flesh-coloured riding boots, each bearing the ornament of a cross. He rode a white horse with trappings of red velvet, and was accompanied by a couple of hundred horsemen or so, the great personages of his court and his city. Often he would proceed to some church in his litter, shaded by the baldachino, a score of led horses mantled in cloth of gold and mules caparisoned in red velvet going before him, together with brilliant horsemen bearing the hats of the Cardinals on staves, and Cardinals themselves in their robes, riding mules, their skirts fastened up to the bridle. And as he went along the people would fall on their knees to receive his blessing; and when he reached the church perhaps it was to bestow some dower, some ancient charity to maidens that came closely veiled, with peep-holes for their eyes, and looking, for all the world, like the perambulatory white sacks that flit along the streets of Tilimisan and Kairouan. And on Holy Thursday His Holiness went in state to the great portico of St. Peter's which was covered in black for the occasion. For he bore a lighted torch in his hand, as did the great dignitaries of the Church, and had come to excommunicate and curse anew the heretic princes of the North, condemning in particular such as held on to Church property. Whereat the Cardinals look at each other and laugh. And the Pope and they throw down their torches exactly as, more than three hundred years before, was done at that dramatic scene at Lyons when Pope Innocent IV., as vicar of Christ, pronounced the Divine malediction on Frederick the Emperor, Stupor Mundi, the harbinger of the modern world. Then the black hangings are removed,

and the people kneel, and the great square is filled with bowed heads, for after the curse on heretics the Pope bestows his benediction on the faithful.

All this pageantry was not supported without difficulty and great exertion in tax-gathering. Reform had abolished or modified the profitable sale of ecclesiastical office; annats and Peter's pence were no longer received from Protestant countries; the Roman treasury was half-empty. The Pontiff was hard put to, and the territories under his sway, which up to the sixteenth century had enjoyed immunity from direct taxation, were now heavily burdened by the Curia, and became half-depopulated as a result. Financial disease rendered the Papal rule infamous. Brigands swarmed in the mountains and along the highways to Rome; the very houses in the city were insecure; money was usually left with the bankers; and pilgrims were fleeced, pillaged, and often assassinated.

The Council of Trent had inaugurated serious reform: it was responsible for serious hypocrisy. Though Italy has produced many of the purest spirits in that gentle army of saints to which Francesco d'Assisi and Angela da Foligno and Caterina Benincasa and Filippo Neri belong, the Italian is not by nature given to the searching of his own heart. There are few in any land that will turn their eyes from beholding vanity or probe the soul to discover its latent wickedness. Religion had become a mere formal habit during the Renascence, and the hearts of men had not ceased to throb with desire or respond to the sensuous insistence of joyous life. So, beneath the cloak of outward observance, the world, the flesh and the devil reigned as before, and prohibition gave a new zest to

illicit pleasure. Nay, even such scandals occurred in Rome as a fraternity of Portuguese men that gave themselves to one another in marriage and mingled the mass with obscene observances; and such evil-doers had to be consigned to the flames. We have said how difficult it was to govern Rome. A city perpetually crowded by so many foreigners, who threw off their own national code of morals when they visited a people of alien manners, had corrupted Rome. Much of the violence of the Middle Ages persisted, and even the insecurity that then characterised all urban life. And at night the sound of cannon would sometimes be heard from afar in the vintage season. The great watch-towers by the sea were firing their artillery to give warning to Rome of some Turkish raid, and in the morning some poor village would be found wanting in cattle and maidens and men. Life was still in daily peril in Italy, religion in subjection, thought languid and sick and chained.

Yet, on the whole, the barbarities of the Middle Ages that persisted through the Revival of Letters and Arts and all the fine culture of the Humanistic Period, had sensibly diminished. But domestic tragedy had increased, especially at Rome, and had become far more dramatic, after a fashion that, later on, it will behove us to examine. And life had become dull to youth and to genius, which is a kind of youth; it smacked of staleness; literature was pursued in fear and trembling, lest the Church should conceive herself outraged by some unwilling inadvertence; art had to conform to Christian treatment as conceived by the Council of Trent; men had to look over their words before they uttered them, even in the common

social intercourse of the street; vice became more subtle by reason of the hypocritical cloak that the Church ordained to conceal its shamelessness; the violation of nunneries was a common adventure because it gave a tang to the colourless shuffle of these flat and truthless days. The Church had triumphed, and feeble flutterings of vitality alone showed that the Renascence was not yet wholly dead.

In this twilight of all that makes life lively, in this despair of all that men deemed fair, a virginal footfall was heard. It was the approach of a new and divine art. Music came with all the freshness of a maid, and set human pulses throbbing in response to pure and healthful measures. And the Popes opened the portals of the Apostolic Chapel wide that she might enter, for her steps bore witness to secret paths that seraphs tread, and in her eyes men saw deep peace, the calm of those that walk with God and are instructed in His mysteries.

Thus far, music had made no very notable progress, and Italy had been remarkable for the absence of musical genius. The Great Age had not produced a single great composer; the executants in Italy were Teutons, for the most part; the music they played was mainly Flemish music. For a hundred years the contrapuntal style of the North had held sway. Complexity in structure was everything then, as storms of astonishment are everything now, and propriety and proportion, grace and sentiment and sense were wholly ignored. The Mass became an exhibition of musical acrobatics, where different libretti and melodies of different character were worked together; the major and the minor were interthreaded, and the bread and wine became the veritable Flesh and

Blood to the jig of a Flanders ale-house or the latest catch sung at the brothel. Baini says that the words imputed made one's flesh creep and hair stand on end; while the same license was extended to all the instruments and the choir; voice, lute, trumpet and organ competing with each other, each in that fashion in which it had best chance of outvieing the others. In fact the rampant individualism of the Renascence is nowhere so manifest as in its music. This was possible because the essential part of the Mass is entirely the function of the officiating priest, and his communion is secret, while the members of the congregation are free to pray or meditate as may be most pertinent to their spiritual needs, and the choir merely accompanies the Sacred Office. From bearing a relation to this office, music "prayed" and "meditated" in its own way, until it had completely emancipated itself from its only reason for being there, namely, as an aid to the worshipper. In so far as it was intellectual it solved pedantic puzzles to which "acrostics were problems for babes"; in so far as it welled from the heart it expressed coarse and libidinous and vulgar joys. Each singer did as pleased him best, and auditors of the period liken the cacophonous effects to the gruntings of a pigsty or a cat's concert on a winter's night. The Council of Trent, dominated by unmusical Italians, seriously contemplated putting down all accompaniment and reverting to the stern, naked simplicity of plain-song. It seemed as if the art that was the least developed and that was deemed the least important of them all, was to be throttled for ever (1564). But there was a man under the protection of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, a man with whom Tasso was

now to be thrown into contact, a poor, disgraced musician who had been ejected from office by a reforming Pope because he was a layman, was married, and had a bad voice. Dire poverty, defeated hope, the bitter gall of bruised affection—all the indignities of life, itself an indignity, were his lot; he saw his sons of promise die one by one and a son of vain expectation remain to torture him. It was as if the gods rejoiced to grind him under heel, but his soul remained, unbruised, in the ancient heavens, and he had with him the Presence that "preserves the stars from wrong". From oppressed men and oppressed nations, when all other utterance is vain or disallowed, the suffering, the defeated hope, the yearning agony, the aspiration of the undying spirit of man can still express its bruised fragrance in the most subtle and disembodied of the arts. The repression of more objective modes of manifestation would appear to favour the peculiar subjectivity of musical expression. The Catholic reaction produced Palestrina and the archetype of highest song. The Cardinals Borromeo and Vitellezi, who sat among the commissioners, pleaded for compromise, and begged Palestrina to see what he could make of his art. It was a fateful moment. Palestrina responded with three Masses, into which he breathed the warm beauty of life. He did for sacred music what Wagner did for the opera; he made the music conform to the subject and express and enhance its vitality. The trial took place in the presence of the Pope. Men quoted from the *Paradiso* of Dante to express their rapture and divine contentment; the Pope compared the harmonies to the music of the Heavenly Jerusalem, where hallelujahs of adoring angels

mingle their strains with the murmur of the pure river of the water of life. The music then heard was not, perhaps, the most splendid, but assuredly it was the most reverent, serious and ineffably devout of all that has been dedicated to the Mystic Sacrifice and the union of God with man. A new and noble art arose, perfect, like the goddess as she sprang from the brow of the Olympian. The new sweet music was not without its influence on Tasso's verse. It was sung in the newly-founded oratorio of Filippo Neri. That Tasso came into contact with Palestrina we know of certainty. Probably he was also acquainted with the gentle Filippo, Palestrina's friend.

Saint Filippo Neri had established that famous and liberal order wherein our own Newman took refuge after he deemed he had found the kindly light he sought, and discovered peace in the Roman Communion. He was the son of a Florentine notary and a lady who belonged to a house famous in the annals of the Republic. His parents were devout, and as a child he loved to haunt San Marco, where the frescoes of Angelico reflect the subtle tenderness of sorrow, and the quiet courts are pervaded by ineffable peace. He was sent, when a youth, to aid a childless uncle, who dwelt near the eldest of the monasteries, the great Benedictine house on Monte Cassino. Here he was wont to seek the solitude of a chapel, perched on a promontory and overlooking the bay of Gaeta; the blue infinite was above him, it was reflected at his feet in the sea, forever at its "priest-like task of pure ablution round earth's human shores"; and here he determined to consecrate his life to the active service of God and man. He abandoned business, became tutor to a private family

in Rome, and spent the spare hours of the night alone with God in the catacombs, and of the day, in button-holing all sorts and conditions of men in the streets and indulging them with quiet, irresistible, Socratic irony and home-thrusts to the soul. He had an inoffensive knack of leading men on to speak of the vital issues of life, and of gaining their hearts by his own confident knowledge of the sweet secrets of religion and his assurance of the compassion of God. And so Filippo Neri stands out from all the formalism and repression and decay of the sixteenth century, a witness, with vision that never wavers, to light beyond the dark eclipse, the vain turmoil, the fevered temptation that is life! Like most saints he was distinguished by his temperate practicality of mind. He founded his society to succour the "Romeos," the pilgrims who flocked to Rome in their thousands, and the convalescents discharged from the hospitals. As a part of this city-mission work, he instituted musical drama from Scripture history, between the acts of which he gave discourses, and in this he was assisted by Palestrina, for Palestrina became Maestro di Capello of Neri's Oratory. It was the first beginning of the oratorio. The Jesuits, recognising the importance of Neri's mission, tried to capture him for themselves, but his unconventional evangel was very different from the spirit of their organisation, of which implicit military obedience was the first and last word. Filippo Neri's order was republican to the core; and like the true gentleman and sincere Christian he was, personal ambition was absent from his nature. It was only by command of the Pope that he became the first Superior of the new order, and he took his turn at the

domestic duties of the house. We have spoken of the Roman rabble. He took these poor blind people to his heart, and they returned his love. Those who are intimate with the Roman poor to-day know how they have kept his memory sweet in their traditions.

Probably, then, Tasso knew something of the gentle Neri. He certainly renewed his relations with Cardinal Albano and Maurizio Cataneo, his secretary, both of whom he had known at Bergamo. There were other great men with whom he came into contact. An Academy met at the palace of the Cardinal, and here Muretus, the great French humanist, and Paolo Manuzio, the father of Tasso's friend, Aldo Manuzio, were to be seen and conversed with, for both were at this time settled in Rome and were members of the Academy.

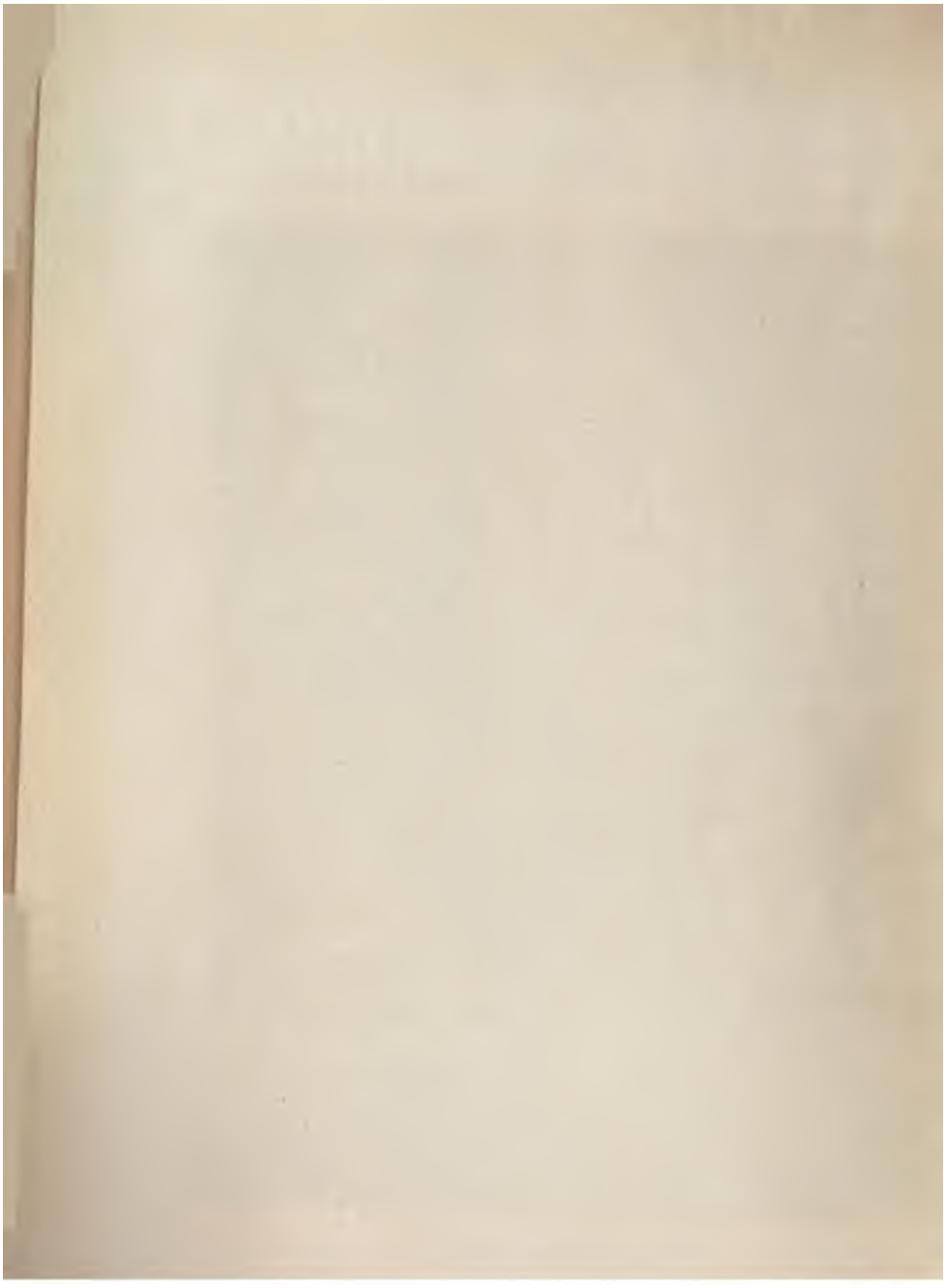
In the hot summer time Cardinal Ippolito, accompanied by the Academy, used to move up to his famous villa on the heights of Tivoli, to escape the malaria of the capital. The villa was one of the loveliest structures of Renascence art; it occupied the spot that Mecænas and Augustus had been wont to frequent, and it contained the incomparable art treasures that are the pride of the Vatican and that had been recently exhumed from the ruins of the wonderful pleasure house of the emperor Hadrian, hard by. Here the little court of poets and scholars discussed Plato and the Muses in frescoed casino or grotto, rendered cool by artificial cascades, or under the shadow of magnificent avenues of cypresses that terminated each in some unbounded perfect vista; while bronze flutes, worked by water power, imitated the songs of birds, or a water organ gave more serious accompaniment to grave discourse, or

some trumpet tone of other ingenious aquatic contrivance called to heroic meditation. And, since *dulce despiere loco*, they could turn to frivolous sport on the terraces, and amuse themselves in playing little practical jokes on each other with the water-tricks that the period was so fond of and that its engineers were so wonderfully skilful in contriving.

Meanwhile great efforts were made to get the Duke of Ferrara to receive Tasso into his service. Tasso was a difficult man, but there were many who loved him. So far, his warm friends had exerted themselves in vain, for there was wretched rivalry between the brothers D'Este, and the Cardinal exacted a promise from each retainer not to enter the ducal service without receiving his special permission. Yet there was some hope, and the best and kindest of Tasso's well-wishers was Lucrezia, the wife of his old school-fellow Prince Francesco Maria. The Prince was away at the wars and Lucrezia was staying at the charming summer retreat of Castel Durante, where the senses are lulled by the murmurings of the swift Metauro as its waters whirl down the deep Apennine valley. Here Tasso joined her, and offered her the consolations of Platonic reasonings and the more persuasive diversion of his own sweet, limpid verse.

Shortly afterwards Lucrezia D'Este obtained permission from her father-in-law, Duke Guidobaldo, to return for a term to her own people and the livelier atmosphere of Ferrara; so in September, A.D. 1571, she and her suite, Tasso among them, set off thither. They lodged on the road at the Abbey of Classe, near Ravenna, hard by what had been the Roman port. The old lighthouse, left by

VILLA D'ESTE, TIVOLI



the receding waves, bore no torch now, but Christian bells, that rung high above a wilderness of rice-fields and the sad desolation of the plain. Then, as to-day, a Christian church stood on the site of the ancient temple of Apollo, its peaceful emblems of the sixth century bearing witness to a time when men regarded the fold as pastured by a gentle Shepherd, and Christ the Avenger and the terrible sufferings of His martyred host were not yet recorded on every vacant space. At Ravenna the Cardinal Legate entertained the Princess and her following; so another historic interest attaches itself to that abode of many memories, where one may still see, as Dante, nay, as Narses and Belisarius saw, imperishable processions of angels and saintly men proceeding for ever; where unfading glories of the Eastern Empire renew themselves with each morning sun, and Justinian and Theodora look down on the ancient altar with unchanged and uncorrupted eyes. So scholarly a man as Tasso would not fail to bend his steps to these silent witnesses to vanished things that are forgotten, nor omit to visit the house that sheltered Dante, and bow the head with reverence before the sepulchre where his bones are laid.

After many stages, the Princess and her suite reached the island-villa of Belriguardo, and stayed awhile amidst the silent dreaming waters of the river that swept by Ferrara then, but has now degenerated into a mere canal. At the solicitation of Lucrezia, the Duke commanded Tasso to accompany him to Sant' Elena near Padua, whither he was going to bathe an old wound of the knee that he had received years before in the French wars.

In all probability it was here that Tasso first heard the

stirring news of a great naval victory over the Turk. Nine hundred years had passed since

> Europe echoed—terror riven—
> That a new foot was on the Earth
> And a new name come down from Heaven,

and ever since every Christian State had been exposed to disaster or terrible fear. But though almost every year witnessed some fresh advance, some fresh triumph of the Crescent, the Christian powers were too jealous of each other to combine against their common foe. "I know how much you can depend on your Christian princes," sneered Mohammed Solaki, the Grand Vizier to the Venetian Ambassador, when a union of Christian forces was contemplated. But at last a coalition was formed of the Papacy, Venice, Spain, and the little duchies and petty republics of Italy. The united navies were entrusted to the command of Don John the Bastard, an able, ardent and impetuous son of Charles V. by a tradesman's daughter of Ratisbon. On 7th October, 1571, the allies came up with the slightly superior navy of the Turk that lay at anchor in the Gulf of Lepanto, on the opposite side of the Isthmus of Corinth to that Gulf of Egina where, at Salamis, another great issue between East and West had been decided. The Christians attacked the Moslems with the ardour that a great provocation incited, but it was tempered by the discretion that so great an issue imposed. The Turk was routed, and the defeat would have been crushing but for the treachery of Gian-andrea Doria, the admiral of the Genoese fleet. But that baseness was not then known. Over fifty Turkish ships were burned or sunk, eight thousand Turks were slain,

seven thousand were taken prisoners, and ten thousand Christian captives were released.

All Italy went wild with joy. Nearly every city erected its triumphal arch; the wealthy hung their balconies with the best works of great masters; the fountains of every villa-garden spouted by day, and fireworks banged and fizzed and spurted away night after night; the thousand poets of Italy vied in outdoing each other in hyperbolic strains. Tasso was silent, though his friend, Prince Francesco Maria, had served in the victorious fleet. He was preparing quite another memorial of the great, eternal conflict between two opposed civilisations. It was the *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

CHAPTER VII

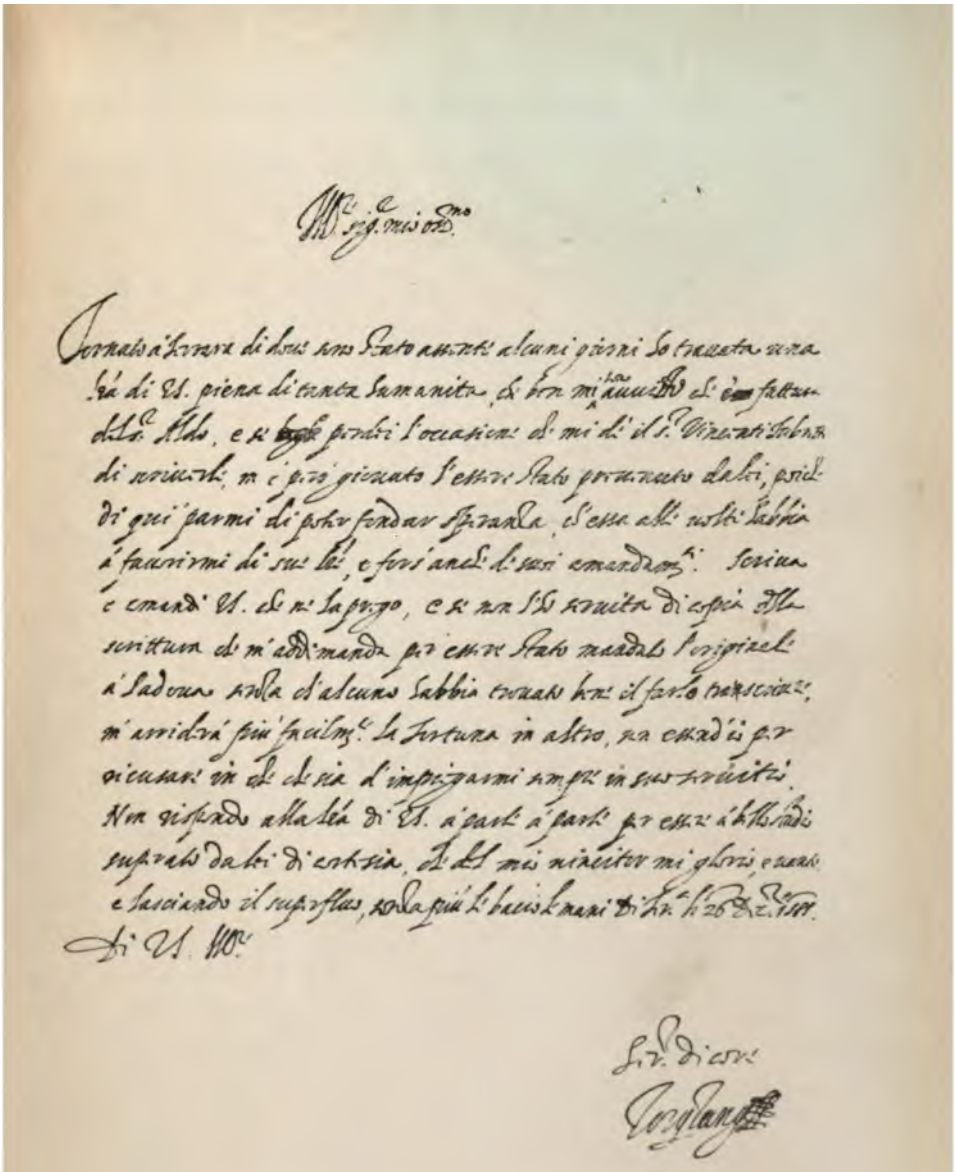
THE TRUE COURTIER'S BOWER OF BLISS

Court Life at Ferrara—Character and Appearance of Tasso—The Loves of Cardinal Luigi and Lucrezia Bendidio—The "Aminta"—Fêtes at Pesaro—Henri III. and his Escape from Poland—His Reception at Venice—A Literary Courtesan—Guarini on the Courtier—The *Gerusalemme* finished

WHEN, towards the close of the year, the Duke returned to his domain after taking the waters, he did not stay long at Ferrara, but, with his court, and Tasso, in all likelihood, went to Comacchio a-fishing. Fishing and hunting were favourite amusements of the courtiers. Every year they repaired to the villas that had been built, here and there, along that dejected shore, a shore that none the less has a peculiar charm of its own; for the grey, flat, sludgy moorland bordering the green shallows of the sea is interlaced with pools that reflect the frown of waving sedges and the blue and white of changing skies and the crimson of sunset. The silence of the morass is now and again broken by strange, wild cry of waterfowl that haunt the place. Close by was the great woodland of Mesola, where the Duke had built himself a sumptuous palace encircled by twelve miles of wall; in the enclosure was primæval forest, stocked with deer and all kinds of game; and, without the wall, if not within it, wolves and boars were to be turned out of the

undergrowth in plenty, and all kinds of dangerous sport was to be had. Perhaps at this time, certainly later on, Tasso was a guest at Mesola. This privilege of going in *villegiatura* with the Estensi was accorded only to the envied few. Tasso has sung of the joyous days of Mesola, where some of the men, bent on sport, were wont to brave fierce salt winds blowing from the sea and heralding the approach of winter, while the ladies held courts of love in the pleasure-house, under the presidency of an elected queen, and debated punctilio, beauty, the courtly service of woman, and nice points of gallantry with those gentler male spirits who preferred philandering and affectation or the refinements of female society to the coarse pleasures of the chase. Who would not be a courtier? Who would not move in a sphere so far removed from the gross, uncouth squalor of meaner life, and taste joys meet for men of birth and their peers, the lofty in spirit, whom alone such bowers of bliss befit?

The princes of the sixteenth century lived for the feverish chase of pleasure; they cast themselves into a very whirlpool of activity. They paid unending rounds of visits to each other's courts, undeterred by the fatigues of journeying on horseback and the discomforts of the road. Even if, peradventure, a sovereign desired to lead a less excited life, the etiquette of State visits was a serious and interrupting factor therein; for the interchange of courtesy between courts had to be marked by festivals and merry-makings that should surpass all that had gone before. Such a visit of State was required in the winter of 1571-72, and Duke Alfonso, nothing loth, rode to Vienna. For Rudolf, the son of Maximilian the Em-

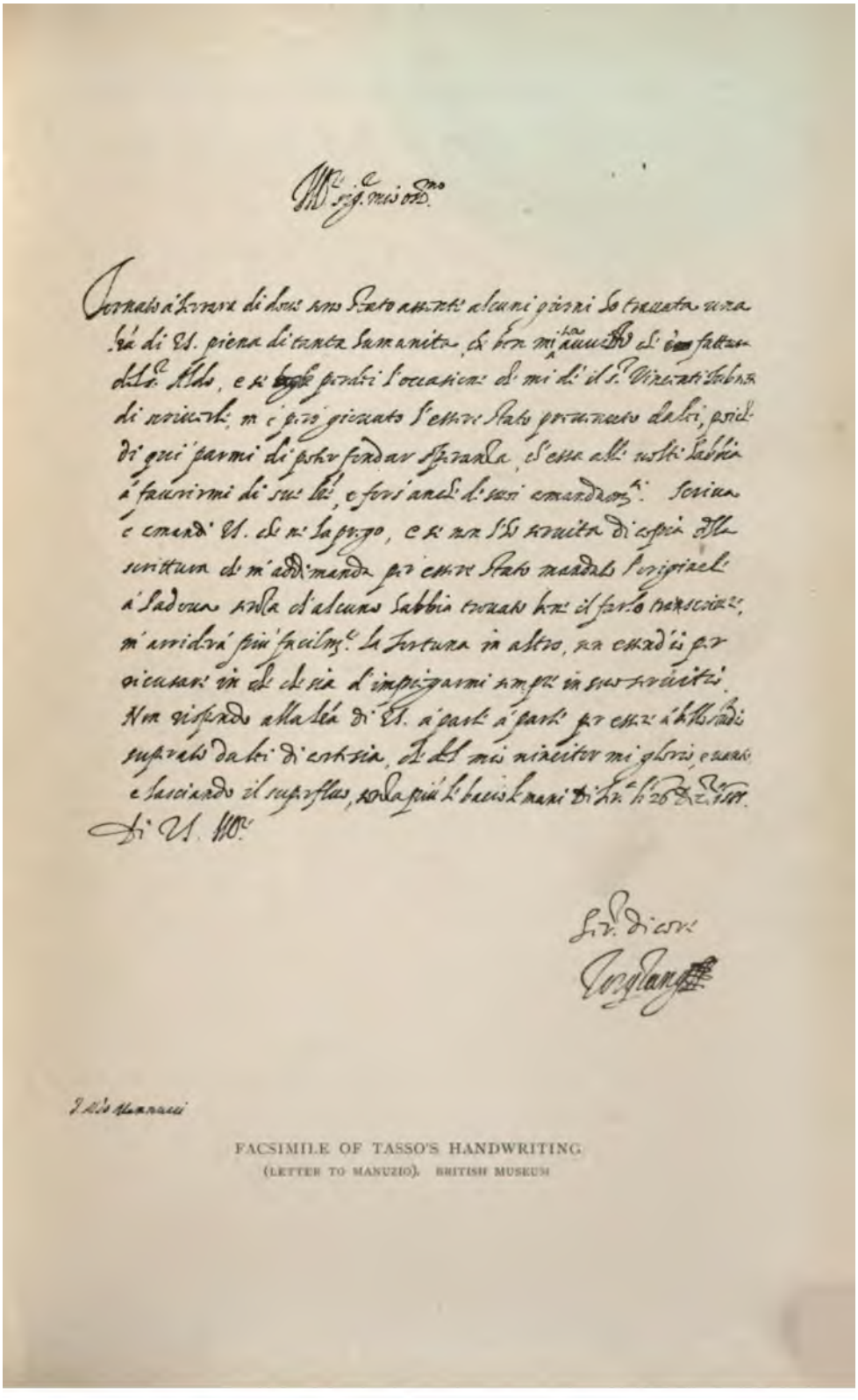


FACSIMILE OF TASSO'S HANDWRITING
(LETTER TO MANUZIO). BRITISH MUSEUM

peror, was to accede to the Iron Crown of Lombardy. The elected King of Italy was always crowned with the broad hoop of gold that concealed a nail from the Cross of Christ and had been worn of ancient days by Lombard kings. This was but a prelude to ascending the venerable throne of Charlemagne and of many Cæsars before Charlemagne, and assuming the headship of what still called itself an Empire, Holy, and Roman.

When Alfonso returned from Austria he granted Tasso a court appointment with a fair salary—more than fifteen scudi d'oro a month—a room in the palace, a place at the courtiers' table, and no other duty than to produce decent verse.

For a young man of twenty-seven, born and reared in the atmosphere that surrounds the dais and with the instincts of a courtier bred in the bone, it should have seemed no small good fortune to become attached to the most brilliant, the most intellectual, and the most renowned of European courts. Above all, there was what Tasso valued even more, "lettered ease and leisure for study," awaiting him. Tasso was in no way unworthy of this brilliant circle. He was of attractive and even distinguished appearance. Tall and spare of body, his limbs were well-proportioned, and he bore himself with the lithe ease and grace that resulted from an education in every kind of knightly exercise and accomplishment. His head, especially his forehead, was large and square, with a depression over each temple. His skin was fair and delicate, and he wore his fine, light-brown hair parted in the middle and hanging down in curls. But his eyebrows were black, far apart, and finely pencilled;



FACSIMILE OF TASSO'S HANDWRITING
(LETTER TO MANUZIO). BRITISH MUSEUM

his eyes were grey and bright yet meditative, and as Dante says of Sordello,

E nel mover degli occhi onesta e tarda.

His cheek bones were those of an Italian, long and low; his nose large and somewhat aquiline; a pensive smile was wont to play around his somewhat large mouth, and his thin lips expressed some measure of determination. His general expression was so thoughtful as to be almost sad. The voice was clear and sonorous, but, as is so often the case in high-strung people, there was a slight impediment in his speech. And close, early study had made him short-sighted. Sometimes his handwriting was so fine as almost to require a magnifying glass, but, being a man of moods, it varied greatly both in quality and size. His manner was grave, reserved and stately; but he was very courteous and always ready to do a kind thing. He usually turned conversation towards serious subjects; and of these he would speak earnestly; yet he could become sprightly and even witty on occasion; sometimes, too, he was sarcastic. His disposition was affectionate, and he had proved himself a model of filial piety; but he was unconscionably proud, avid of praise, and hypersensitive. He was a true child of the Renascence, eager both to learn and enjoy and to make the most of himself and of life; but there was a vein of sincere and by no means critical devotion in his, as in Bernardo's character; was it the Jesuit school that had fostered this into an undue terror of the Lord? He was often abstracted and addicted to day-dreaming, and his soul would "become a star and dwell apart" in the world

of creative imagination so frequently that he became predisposed to misjudge the true proportion of terrestrial values. His memory was good, his learning very considerable, his application unwearied. "The thing most needful to students is perseverance," was advice that he is said to have emphasised. Few men were readier to take or to forgive offence. The earliest evidence of mental instability is contained in his restless discontent with his surroundings and his suspicious irritability. As is inevitable to the artistic temperament, he had small sense of the value of money and was careless in expenditure.

It behoved the young courtier as a prudent man to gain the favour of his co-retainers, and especially of the powerful Pigna, a man somewhat disposed to envy, and extremely vain of his own performances in prose and verse. For a whole year Pigna had been the servitor-in-love of Tasso's early flame, Lucrezia Bendidio, who was now married to Count Machiavelli. As an old adorer of La Bendidio, Tasso had a difficult part to play. He, therefore, associated himself with Guarini, who was related to the lady, and they produced, jointly, a series of commentaries on certain poems that Pigna had written in her honour, contrasting the adoration of the spirit with the attractions of the flesh. Tasso and Guarini, under the title of "Bendivino," a play on the name Bendidio, presented their productions to the Princess Leonora. Tasso thus skilfully conjoined delicate flattery of the Princess with a compliment to Pigna as poet. But meanwhile a little intrigue was proceeding of which, in all probability, Leonora was quite unconscious. The Cardinal Luigi had

returned to court, and he also was amusing himself by paying his addresses to La Bendidio, but not wholly with idle, still less with romantic, intent. The lady returned the Cardinal Prince's passion with at least equal ardour. They were wont to laugh together over the persistence of Pigna's devotion, and La Bendidio spoke of him with tolerant despisal as "that good man who writes verses," or at times, sneeringly, as her "white-beard". There was every opportunity for the cardinal to meet the object of his unecclesiastical passion as often as he pleased, for La Bendidio was always about his sister, whose chastity repelled suspicion from her own chamber-door and almost from the doors of her intimates. The intrigue served to while away the time of this lively priest, who found Ferrara rather a boring place. Poor pleasure-seeking prelate! that had fought in vain against his fate when the ecclesiastical career was first imposed on him; that later, had tried again and again to escape from his fetters! The Council of Trent had sat, and the severe doctrine and discipline that followed it rendered all his struggles unavailing. And there was a very special reason that rendered the Papacy inexorable. It was a chronic need of money, and, by an arrangement made thirty years before, the fief was limited to the direct line of Ercole II., Alfonso's father, and on the extinction of that line it would revert to the Pope, its overlord.

And now (A.D. 1572) the Archduchess Barbara died leaving the Duke a widower for the second time, and without issue. So the great feudatory of the Pope rode to Rome in the vain hope of making terms for his nephews if, as seemed very likely, he should die without lawful

heirs of his own begetting. He took Tasso in his train, and the poet went with the court to Tivoli, and lounged in the pleasant gardens, and looked once again over the Campagna to the great masses of the Abruzzi, that were covered with snow now, for it was winter. Tasso wrote a threnody on the dead duchess, which exhibits all the marks of being a perfunctory performance. Indeed, Barbara of Austria seems to have been an amiable but colourless personage, with very little but her rank to command men's attention. On the return of the Duke to Ferrara all the reckless jollity, the mad revels, are resumed as if nothing had happened :—

> And gaiety on restless tip-toe hovers,
> Giggling with all the gallants who beset her ;
> And there are songs and quavers, roaring, humming
> Guitars and every other sort of strumming.
> And there are dresses splendid but fantastical,
> Masks of all times and nations, Turks and Jews,
> And harlequins and clowns with feats gymnastical.

There were madcap pranks on the fountained terraces and courtly intrigues in those cool grottos and blossoming bowers on the artificial hills. There was music in its most languorous and seductive forms, and much graceful dancing by the court ladies, and the sharp clash of their wits when the "Concert of Ladies" was not singing, that famous quartette whereof the fame spread throughout Europe, the singing of Lucrezia Bendidio and her sister Isabella, and Tarquinia Molza, the poet and scholar, and Laura Peperara that had captured Tasso's heart in her early youth. For solo singing was no longer the only form that fashion allowed to those of gentle birth. And there were fantastic masqueradings in the streets, wherein

the Duke himself took part and proved that, in certain ways, he was coarse and insensitive, after the manner of the Renascence, but therefore threw himself into the buffoonery better. He entered heart and soul into the mummery and played the fool exceeding well. And above all there was the theatre for which Ferrara was so famous, the theatre of Ariosto, where the princes of Este did not disdain to play, and where the "istrioni," the wandering players, too, who were always welcome, were to be found. Sometimes they played tricks of pantomime and sometimes "held up the mirror to the times". The entertainment that was most in fashion, however, was the musical masque, wherein the beauties and gallants of the court took part, and whereon poets and sculptors and painters and costumiers lavished their genius. And a masque Tasso determined to write.

He withdrew from the gaieties of Ferrara for a while. He shut himself up in the Belvidere, and there, with the quiet river flowing on either side and nothing to disturb him but the cry of the waterfowl or the splash of oars, he set himself to composition. The travelling company of comedians came there, too, for a time, and the author was thus able to make trial of his work. He put his scholarship to good purpose: like Milton, like Tennyson, he culled every flower of imagination that was suitable, and interwove the choicest imaginations and phrases of Hesiod and Virgil, Anacreon and Sappho, Moschus, Bion, Ovid, Theocritus and even the late Greek romancers with his own. Yet Tasso was no plagiarist: he, too, like many another great poet, combined the imaginations of his starry kin with a grace and stately charm that is quite

his own. As the great painter takes what he finds, but combines and arranges it in an exquisite harmony of colour and form that displays the characteristics of his own temperament, so Tasso laid the pastoral poetry of antiquity under contribution, but with rare felicity, his genius invested every reminiscence with his own individuality: it became perfectly his. Antique imaginations mingled so completely in his master-fancy that they issued from his brain endowed with new force and freshness, and bore, indeed, a stamp of perfect novelty. The "Aminta," as the new pastoral drama was called, was first rehearsed in the gardens of the Belvidere, but not in the finished form it ultimately assumed. The Duke was delighted and not without reason. Apollo and Marsyas and Pan might have sat on the flower-sprinkled bank of the river, and sung together for once in amity. Never did sweeter strains of new creation swell the enraptured heart. The "Aminta" is a poem full of roguish innocence; it is an embodiment of youthful longing, an intoxication of desire, a dreamland of the senses, where naïve love sports coyly in the covert among the fresh young leaves of spring, and rivals the roses in blushing, and peeps and hides again. The "Aminta" is possessed by that supreme art that conceals itself behind a veil of alluring simplicity. It was presented in the richest and most splendid way, and accompanied by dulcet music.

It remained unprinted until Tasso's friend Aldo Manuzio issued a pirated edition while the poet lay helpless at Sant' Anna. But manuscript copies multiplied, and it took the world by storm; it was frequently acted at Ferrara; and soon it was played all over Italy. Tasso

was acclaimed the most promising young man of his day (1573). The poem was full of half-hints and veiled allusions to incidents of court life. These were well understood by the spectators, but are lost on the reader of to-day. A later age fancied that it detected in the verses a prophecy of the mental disaster that befel the poet; it professed to discover in it the expression of a sweet melancholy love for the Princess Leonora. There do indeed occur passages that readily lend themselves to such an interpretation. "Ah," says the heroine, "you do not know what Tircis wrote me, when in the delirium of his passion he wandered, bereft of reason, through the forest and moved the nymphs and shepherds to pity and derision. In what he wrote there was indeed no sign of madness, but his acts were often those of one bereft of reason." But Leonora was elderly, sickly, pallid, in the wane of a beauty that had never been great, a prosaic person with some aptitude for business and wanting in that princely love for art and letters which the Duke and her sister, the Princess Lucrezia, possessed. She led the retired life of a chronic invalid, and if amorous verses were addressed to her, these were only the necessary compliments of the time, when every one spoke a conventional language of gallantry and hyperbole. Tasso had little of the bold, ardent lover in his composition; he was not the man to hazard the resentment of the Duke, who regarded himself as the guardian of the honour of the proudest line in Italy; who, in accordance with the sentiment of the times, would have justly regarded an alliance with the Tassi as the dream of impertinent insanity, and, as we shall see, treated a liaison with any of his female members as an audacious insult to be wiped

out with blood. The Duke, so far from observing any under-current of such meaning in the poem, was delighted with it and with the compliments to himself and his House that it contained. For in the Prologue, Tasso explained that his characters shall declare themselves in nobler language than befits swains and rustic damsels, for they are to be under the inspiration of love; moreover he gives them a celestial origin; and is thus enabled to flatter the House of Este, and, in the character of Tircis, he himself is welcomed by a man of divine appearance, who is no other than Alfonso (the Duke was a man in the prime of life, of stately presence, looked the warrior he had been, and won the forbearance and admiration of his overtaxed subjects largely by reason of his gallant bearing). Alfonso rewarded the poet, who bid fair to renew the lustre, somewhat dimmed, of the court that had sheltered Ariosto and Boiardo and the first artists and scholars and men of letters of their day, and whereof the fame, as being the very centre of all sweetness and light, had gone forth to all Europe for four successive generations. He gave him the chair of Geometry and the Spheres at the University. The office was as little onerous as that of a professor at Oxford or Cambridge. Tasso had only to lecture on festival days, nor was he supposed to deal with the highest mathematics.

A still greater compliment was paid Tasso by his co-courtier Guarini—the sincere compliment of imitation. Ten years later Guarini wrote "Il Pastor Fido," a pastoral-tragic comedy less masculine even and more sensuous than the "Aminta," but rivalling, and some say surpassing it in the dignity of many of its sentiments and in felicity

of expression; as it certainly does in the mechanical cunning of its form. "Il Pastor Fido" is the harbinger of Watteau in verse; it is a near approach to the true joyousness which that master possesses, yet this is expressed, as by the painter, in that courtly counterfeit of the pastoral which modern taste rejects as a sham. It is full of the conventional charlatanism of the time, full of the spirit of the courtly service of woman, but beneath disingenuous romance and fashionable insincerity, we can discover some growing respect for true womanhood, some growing appreciation of simple love. It has charming scenes, yet is tarnished by a wantonness that deliberately seeks to provoke by half-concealing nudity in a suggestive veil.

Tasso was now enjoying a few transient sunbeams before the clouds gathered and his young manhood passed into gloom. The reputation that had accrued to a poem of which he thought so little that he refused to have it printed gave him good hope for a greater and more serious work which he was busily engaged in finishing and which had occupied him for some years, perhaps ever since the old Venetian days. Fair women, of high birth and the high education that the Renascence bestowed on both sexes alike, smiled on him: he was in great favour with the Duke, on whom such genius as he had displayed reflected no small renown; he enjoyed the society of the brightest wits in Italy; his life was a round of pleasure and applause. His old friend Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, and the Duke's daughter-in-law, the Princess Lucrezia, invited him to Pesaro (1574) to superintend a representation of the "Aminta" that was to take place there, for the Duke was anxious to banish the recollection of the severity with which he had

suppressed a rebellion of his over-taxed subjects two years before, by indulging them with a series of splendid festivals at carnival time. So Tasso journeyed to Pesaro and saw his old friend the Prince Francesco Maria, who had returned from the Turkish wars, once more. The grand fête began with a joust by torchlight; this was followed by a performance of the Erofilomachia of a certain Sforza degli Oddi of Perugia, and then came the "Aminta". There were the usual philosophical disputations among the literati, in which Tasso took a prominent part; they took place before a gay gallery of gentle dames, belaced and bejewelled, and cavaliers in velvet and beplumed. One of these discussions, on the philosophy of Epicurus, was an interlude sandwiched between the bright weavings of the dance!

Meanwhile events were happening in Poland that aroused Duke Alfonso's ambition to be elected king of that country. The Polish Monarchy had become but an empty name, the shadow of a crown. In 1572 the Polish nobles, in the half-eastern garb of flowing robes and top-boots, scimitars suspended to the girdle, bearing bows and arrows, their heads shaven so as to leave but a single tuft of hair, passed the famous Pacta Conventata, and gave the crown to Henri, Duke of Valois. Neither he nor any subsequent monarch was to be entrusted with any powers beyond that of summoning the diet of nobles at will: he might neither choose nor divorce his wife without the consent of his peers, but he might still lead the army in battle and appoint to high military and ecclesiastical posts, while his revenue was great, and his chief duty was to be the principal figure in the pageants which the age loved and at half-barbaric feasts. Henri, who was destitute of any sense of duty,

Henrico Terzo, fratello di Carlo Nono, sessagesimosecondo Re di Fracia, prese la corona del 1574 hauēdo prima, mestre uiuerua il fratello, maneggiato p̄ sui ualorosamete la guerra cotra gli Ugonotti, e cotra i lor fautori, et otte nutone gloriose uittorie Fu in uita del frello, eletto da i polomi lor Rs, e coronato in Cracouia, ma l'onō primo di gl Regno, intesso ch̄ egli hebbe la morte del frello, ritornō in prefettura in Fracia; oue sin' hora, ch̄ siamo all' 1588 è quasi sem pre stato trauagliato dalle guerre de i precipi Ugunotti, e da genti straniere, ch̄ li fauoriscono, p̄ch̄ esso uorebbe ch̄ nel suo Regno da tutti si osseruasse la Religione Catholica.

HENRI III

FROM A CONTEMPORARY PRINT. BRITISH MUSEUM

and whose sole ambition was enjoyment, had readily closed with those insulting terms: indeed he lied and cajoled to obtain them. But he found himself among nobles who flouted him and slew one another in tourneys held in his honour, a semi-civilised people, who gloried in violence and disorder; so he shut himself up in his palace and passed his days in dissipation. Now came news of the death of his brother Charles IX. Henri should succeed to the French crown. He dreaded lest the nobles should not allow him to return to France, so one day in June, 1574, he presided at a great feast which he gave at his castle at Cracow, made himself more than usually agreeable to his convivial guests, and went to bed as usual. Next morning there was unwonted silence in the royal chamber. The Grand Chamberlain knocked and knocked; there was no reply. The door was locked, so a window was forced open. The candles still guttered in their sockets, the pages still stood by the great curtained bed. The Chamberlain flung the curtains aside; there was no monarch to be found within. Henri had escaped during the night by a postern gate, and, accompanied by his French gentlemen in waiting, was in full flight for France. There was a helter-skelter pursuit, and, on the road that led to liberty, the wretched, perjured, swindling king, the basest of the base line of Valois, the man whose idea of ruling France was to dress himself in woman's garb and carry lap-dogs in his muff, for the first and last time in his life showed a little pluck, and gave hope that after all he might learn to play the man. He had the bridges broken down behind him as he rode almost haphazard along a route concerning which he and his knights knew nothing.

At last the Grand Chamberlain and the pursuers came up with him, but he was close to the German frontier and in safety, and he boldly refused to return. It was to succeed this craven cousin and the sham throne that he had vacated that Duke Alfonso aspired.

Henri took his route homeward by way of Vienna and was expected at Venice, so the Duke rode thither accompanied by his courtiers, among whom was Tasso. The Venetians, hoping, like Alfonso, to conceal real weakness by a lavish display of wealth, prepared to receive Henri with a pomp and splendour that great artists in the employment of the State recorded on the walls of the ducal palace. The sound of the hammer was unceasing; there was feverish activity in every narrow *calle*—

> All tongues spake of him, and the blearéd sights
> Were spectacled to see him.

Princes and nobles hastened to Venice to enjoy this new round of pleasure that was offered them. The skill of great artists was employed to devise picturesque processions and imposing pageants of State, so that the full might and glory of Venice might be witnessed and remain for ever in the minds of men. Nothing could have been more splendid, more overpoweringly gorgeous, up to and beyond the point of nauseating surfeit, than the reception given to Henri. When he reached the littoral, sixty senators in ducal robes arrived, each in a gondola that was adorned with all the luxury that the city could devise. The former ambassador to France read an address to this king who might counterbalance the power of Spain in Italy, and the monarch, followed by dukes, came on to Murano in a gondola that was like a star on the waters.

Forty young men of the noblest birth met him in their gondole that swept on in a half circle; each wore a long silk robe, and their gondoliers were gay in silk liveries that burned with colour in that brilliant sunshine and exhibited the embroidered arms of the families they served. The houses of Murano, now so mean and desolate, were hung with velvets and gold brocade. Parks of artillery were perpetually going off, and music, ~~so sweet on the waters~~, always preceded the King and gave notice of his approach.

Next morning came the Doge in the famous ducal barge, the *Bucentoro*, accompanied by 200 ships of war in battle array. He ascended the steps of the palace with slow, stately gait, holding a cross of pure gold in his right hand. Then he knelt before the King and led him to the admiral's ship that was decorated with a magnificence never known before, even in Venice, and so they came to Lido, and again the King disembarked. A procurator of State held an umbrella over the King, a mark of honour that Venice had copied from the East, and the procession passed under a vast triumphal arch, that the genius of Palladio had reared for the occasion, to a Loggia with an altar, before which Henri knelt while the *Te Deum* was sung, and the Patriarch of Venice gave his benediction amidst salvoes of artillery. Then the King was conducted to the *Bucentoro* and was rowed to Venice, with the great fleet escorting him, its innumerable gold and purple banners fluttering to the breeze. Henri was roused to enthusiasm. His corruption was as yet incomplete. The weak, sensual, lying, treacherous Valois was never wholly stupid or quite callous; he had shown some zeal for learning in early youth,

he had exhibited some liberality of mind, some appreciation of the beauty of holiness even; he still retained some natural piety. He thought of his mother and wished to God she could have been there to see it all and how he was honoured. Arrived in Venice, the King was lodged in the Palazzo Foscari on the grand canal, while Duke Alfonso abode at the Fondamenta dei Turchi, which was the property of the Estensi. There was a delirium of merry-making that day: the city was illuminated half through the night. And so the King gave himself up to Venetian hospitality, with days set apart for privacy, when he went about incognito and indulged in snug debauch. To this he was egged on by his cousin, the Duke of Ferrara, who never left his side, and Tasso tells us that, in his judgment, the stay at Venice did much to enfeeble Henri's character and cause the calamities that disturbed his reign over France.

Among the ladies he visited was the famous Veronica Francia, whose name is to be found in the list of Venetian public women, their dwelling-places and prices. To beauty this woman added some learning and a fine intelligence. She had been married to one Paniza, a physician, but she left him to adopt a career whereof the status in the Republic was not altogether unlike that of the Greek Companions. Such women were more than tolerated, for their taxation is said to have brought the State an annual income of 300,000 crowns. The influence of the East, where harlotry has always been a recognised and hardly dishonourable profession, was very manifest in Venice. Veronica gained the real friendship of illustrious men, such as Tintoretto, the Venieri (friends of our poet's

father), and Marcantonio della Torre. She was, at this time, in the maturity of her charms, and gave Henri her portrait to carry away with him to France. As time went on, whether from repentance or easy circumstances or satiety or from a co-operation of motives, as happens with so many of the profligates of history, her heart or the direction of her emotional energies became changed. She devoted herself to religion and good works, and urged the Senate to open a hospital for penitent women. She got into difficulties with the Inquisition on account of alleged peculiarities in her religious views. Like all learned Italians of the period, she prided herself on her skill in the polite art of letter-writing, and, six years later, when Montaigne visited Venice, she sent him a copy of her epistles. He speaks of her as a "noble Venetian lady" and gave her messenger two crowns.

One day a throne, draped in tissue of gold, was erected for Henri in the Chamber of the Great Council. The Doge sat on the King's right hand, and they looked down on the rank and beauty of Venice. Around the walls were ranged 200 of the fairest daughters of the Republic, tricked out in white silk, and the great hall glittered with diamonds and pearls. Henri descended from the throne and made the tour of the hall, inspecting each and all, for all were attractive, and each lady curtsied as he passed. Then the young nobles came forward to the strains of music and took each his allotted beauty by the hand and, raising it, led her away to the banqueting hall. The table was loaded with sweetmeats in the form of allegorical figures, whereon the best artists had been employed.

Another time the Senate renewed the time-honoured struggle between the Nicoletti and Castellani, which had been instituted to train the youth of the city to manliness and agility, but had been put down because the contest degenerated into the licence of Donnybrook Fair. There was no work done in Venice that day, for every one in the city, from the eldest patrician down to the patient, plodding mechanic, was attracted by the rarity and excitement of the event. Soldiers had to keep order among the confused crowd of traders, craftsmen, apprentices, sailors, butchers, bakers, and all sorts and conditions of men who pressed forward and craned their necks to see. The captain of the Nicoletti was put *hors de combat* by a severe blow on the face, and Henri had the humanity to stop the combat, nor would he sanction its renewal when the discomfited captain, now somewhat recovered, begged to be permitted to recommence the tussle.

And now nothing would content the Duke but to drag the not unwilling monarch, accompanied by Emanuele Filiberto, Duke of Savoy, Guglielmo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, and Cardinal Buoncompagno, the papal legate, to Ferrara. He dearly wanted the Polish crown that he might outshine the Medici, and his immediate object was to gain the good will and good word of the House of Valois, to which he was so closely related, by the exhibition of a more than usual splendour and a remarkable evidence of that hospitality for which the Estensi were so renowned. Everywhere on the route there was the same shouting of the mob and banging of musketry, and at Ferrara the usual show of splendour and wearisome merry-making. Nor did Alfonso bid adieu to his guest until he had

ridden with him to Turin. He gained nothing by his labours. Though Henri was still legal sovereign of Poland, the whole population of that land despised him, and he counted for nothing in their eyes.

The outward life of Tasso and his co-courtiers, then, was one of glittering attraction. The court of the sixteenth century was a magnet that drew all the best intellects of the time to itself, for there mind and sense combined to weave an irresistible spell. The imagination of all youths of promise was almost invariably fired by the fascinations of a life that

> Flowed in pleasures and vaine pleasing toyes
> Mingled emongst loose Ladies and lascivious boyes.

But noisome, evil things lurked in this pleasant Eden. Listen to what Guarini, who, as ambassador, had experiences of many courts, who was ever trying to escape from Ferrara, says. It is a formidable indictment, as accurate as it is dignified: "Methought that in princely dwellings folk would exhibit a higher moral quality, since they possess all the copious plenitude that may adorn our nature. I found it the reverse, Uranio. Men of high lineage were soothe enough in promising but vastly slack in performance, and I found them the foes of all simple goodness; gentle and reposeful were they in aspect, but swollen in pride as the vast sea. A race fair to outward seeming only. Lurking behind a mask of compassion the penetrating eye may see the base soul, and more honied deception than good faith. What elsewhere is counted manliness, here is held to be a defect. Nay, shame is imputed to the deed that is not crooked, the love that is not simulated, the simplicity of holiness,

the faith that may not be broken, the guileless heart and the clean hand—all these are misprised as the marks of mean spirit, mere dull stupidities, and trifles to call up a laugh. Trick and lie; fraud and robbery; spoliation hypocritically disguised; to grow fat with gifts and ruin another; to find one's glory in another's fall; these are the manly distinctions of this perfidious crew: but by no means courage, or reverence for age or rank or code. They are unrepressed by shame; respecting neither the claims of affection nor those of blood; with no memory of any act of kindness. In a word, nothing is more worshipful, holier, more conspicuously right, than all that is the exact opposite to their vast hunger for court-distinctions, their ravenous appetite for gain."

Tasso must have been worn out when he got back to Ferrara, for he was busily at work, in the brief intervals of these dissipations, finishing his *opus magnum*, and probably all this increased the severity of the quartan fever which fell on him. He lived for the most part in a fruitful but marshy land, and was hardly ever free from ague, while, every now and then, he experienced serious and prolonged exacerbations of it. He had not entirely recovered from this attack by the spring of 1575, and he fell ill again in the summer. But in the midst of unceasing gaiety, ill health, and a voluminous correspondence with an enormous circle of literati and friends, he had practically completed the great poem. As in the "Aminta," he had drawn from every source. His great scholarship placed all the wealth of all the poets of antiquity at his disposal. Nay there is a singular resemblance between the *Gerusalemme* and an account of

the expedition against the Saracens of the Balearic Islands in 1114. The tale was told by Diaconus, the secretary of Pietro Moricone, Archbishop of Pisa, who led the expedition, and to whose passionate appeals it was due. It seems more than probable that Tasso was acquainted with this mediæval record too.

"I hasten to inform you," he writes to the Cardinal Albano, Torquato's as he had been Bernardo's good friend, "being now, by the grace of God, perfectly recovered from a wearisome attack of ague, and after long expectancy, I have brought my 'Goffredo' to an end." Tasso first called his *Jerusalem Delivered* after Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine, the leader of ten thousand cavalry and eighty thousand foot soldiers of the mighty host that enlisted in the First Crusade.

CHAPTER VIII

THE *GERUSALEMME LIBERATA*

TASSO was a little over thirty when he completed his *opus magnum*, the *Jerusalem Delivered*. It is a poem wherein he manifests his high descent from Dante and Petrarch and Ariosto, and restores the great accents of the past. Nothing could have been more happy than his selection of a subject. The delivery of the Holy City and the sepulchre of Christ from the Moslem appealed to a generation in which enthusiasm for learning and for the gratification of all human capacities and desires had been replaced by the rigidity of dogmatic religion and even by the revival of some spiritual earnestness. The poem broke virgin soil at a time when the romances of chivalry had been worn threadbare by poets. And it touched a vital interest of the age. For the coasts of Italy were still ravaged from time to time by Moslem corsairs; the results that should have accrued from the victory at Lepanto were being lost by Christian disunion and the superior arts of Ottoman diplomacy; the Turkish Empire still appeared to remain at the height of its power; the Crescent bore hardly less menace to the Cross than it had done during the past nine hundred years. And the subject was not merely calculated to appeal to living emotions, to arouse patriotic and religious passions to ready

response, but it enabled Tasso to introduce, in his crusading heroes, the brave forebears of many of the great families of Italy, and so pay many compliments, especially to the famous line of Este. By poetical license he could alter chronological fact; and he lost no opportunity, consistent with a great artistic purpose, of adroit flattery of the powerful.

The poem, then, aspired to be an epic. It is a narrative wherein Tasso strove to make the medium the fit expression of high heroism, of noble deeds; the story is of a vehement mission that made nought of strait and suffering, that changed the great course of things, and bequeathed a deeper significance to life. The work has the distinction that it is the first great Christian epic. Tasso conceived a noble resolve. Hitherto epics had been the outcome of the large, free, joyous life of antiquity, or the phantasies of mediæval romance. He retained something of both elements, and added to them a Christian sentiment. The poem is marked by a subtle undercurrent of gentle melancholy—melancholy derived from within and melancholy born of a faith that is conscious of sin, but also of Divine love, and that consoles the suffering victims of life, the weak and defeated, with the Abiding Presence and the prospect of ultimate redemption from their woes.

The *Gerusalemme* is pre-eminently sensuous; but, with the exception of one erotic episode in the gardens of Armida, an episode that has been closely followed and almost translated by Edmund Spenser, it contains nothing that might offend the most fastidious ear; and we may forgive Tasso for this solitary sin. He was an Italian, a poet and no precisian; and even our own great, match-

less Milton, momentous, puritanic and superior, can be convicted of occasional lapses towards warmth; lapses that we all regret, but that even the devoutest critic refuses to censure; for, after all, do they not reconcile us to his severity and manifest his essential kinship with ourselves in our weakness? But such persistent purity of phrase and feeling in one on whom the mantle of Ariosto had fallen was indeed a rare phenomenon in the sixteenth century.

The unity of the poem is admirably preserved, the action is complete. In groundwork it relates the events of the mighty enterprise that followed that vast gathering at Clermont, when the Pope, Urban II., sped the crusaders on their passionate errand, and the forces of all Christendom were hurled on Islam. It tells how, after enduring the perils of the sea, the brave company reached treeless wastes and traversed silent deserts, enduring famine and visited by fatal sickness; how they survived many disasters; how they exhibited the lofty chivalry of brethren-at-arms, as well as the sad story of their dissensions; and, finally, how, in the end, they rode, knee-deep in blood, into the Holy Sepulchre and prostrated themselves before the tomb of the Lord.

And yet, in spite of this underlying unity, what a strange medley the great work is! Lamartine, himself a poet, whose delicate, musical ear, languor and tender grace rendered him peculiarly appreciative of Tasso, has left a felicitous criticism. "What kind of tale have we?" he asks. "A romance of knight-errantry, more serious in character, but as full of capricious and incredible imaginings as those of Ariosto or the Arabian Nights. What

about the characters? Christian and Moslem are undistinguished in an amalgam of madcap heroism, fanaticism and chivalric braggadocio. Individuality is marked only by the outward signs of vestment, casque or turban, and the knighthood common to all is of an abstract and conventional type. What as to action? In truth, an epic masquerade, wherein the warriors of two separate races and civilisations are merged in a gallantry common to both; where the concealed and immured women of the East, Clorinda, Armida, Erminia, under the ridiculous disguise of pastoral nymphs or stage amazons or witches of the night, sigh of bucolic love, fight like Hercules, work enchantments and cast spells, transform heroes into beasts, fishes or whimsical monsters, and issue all of a sudden from pavilions in panoplies of steel or bedecked, like ladies of the opera or princesses of the court, in order to utter the affected languishing sentiments of heroines of romances or the diction of the academic muse. There is no probability in it, nothing veracious, no conformity with requirements of poesy, scene, time or things. Here is a drama of pure, fantastic invention, which might just as well be enacted by lunar shades as by Christian and Moslem foes in Palestine. In a word, it is unsubstantial, a dream.

"But it is a dream chaunted in lines that cannot die; a romance woven and related with such a prodigal outpouring of imagination, religious feeling, tenderness and magnanimity, that the reader forgets all about time, place and inconsistency, and follows the pathetic adventures of the poem with no less absorbed interest than if they were gospel truth. There are scenes wherein the circumstances and atmosphere are so moving that incongruity and odd-

ness of conception are redeemed; there is a charm comparable to the witcheries of Armida herself, a charm which flows from every strophe, a melody which intoxicates with sound; and, as there is delirious vision in the Eastern poppy, so this poetic opiate delivers you, unresisting, to ravishing reverie. Above all there is style; dyed with such pictures, singing such harmonies, that one is dazzled by its splendour and submits to be lulled by its music, just as one is on some glittering gala night of Venice by the gondola as it rocks in front of the façades of that wonderland. It is this style, this art of metrical composition, this verse that belongs to the flower of life—sparkling, musical, filled with sunshine like the Orient, heroic of pulse, tearful, and full of sadness, which breathes a living spirit into the poem and has given it immortality."

Is there anything in letters more tender or touching than the episode of Olindo and Sofronia, where the Christian maiden, to save a general massacre, accuses herself of having violated the mosque, and Olindo, her lover, takes the fact upon himself? Milton is not undebted to the Council of the Infernal Powers in the fourth canto; the flight of Erminia from the Christian guard, her reception by the shepherds on the banks of the Jordan, and the praise of pastoral life, are among the most delightful things in all literature. What fascination is there like to the dainty charm of Armida's garden, where one breathes the very atmosphere of the isle of Aphrodite, where drowsy strains fill us with their voluptuous swell, and the goddess takes us, lulls us to repose on her very breast? Whoever forgets the wonder of the magic flight of the Soldan through the enchanted air? or

ERMINIA AMONG THE SHEPHERDS

ANNIBALE CARACCI (1560-1609). NATIONAL GALLERY

the pathos of the death of Clorinda? And in the last fight of Argante and Tancred, Tasso strikes a note wherein he bids adieu alike to the languid ravishment of sadness and the sweet ecstasy of sense; and though, like Orpheus, he cannot refrain from turning one last, swift glance towards the beautiful shadow, he is inspired, for the moment, with martial ardour and fills our hearts with heroic fire as Virgil fills us—but not as Homer.

Although more translations of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* have been attempted than those of any other Italian poem except the *Divina Commedia*, as a whole it cannot be done into English. Indeed, how can any poet be rendered by other speech than his own? The poetic temper creates its own poetic atmosphere in the music of language, and it is vain to attempt to reproduce in an alien tongue either the rhythmic movement or the inevitable word. Edmund Spenser took Tasso and Ariosto as his models, and maintained that he had improved on his masters by the underlying allegory of his own poem. His moral intention was unquestionably sincere, though, happily, the poet is often borne away from his purpose and apt to slip his chain. But the *Faerie Queene* lacks the swift movement, the compelling force, the warm atmosphere, laden with love and startled by the clash of arms, the glow and the life of the *Gerusalemme*. Spenser's women are not so ripe and real; they are lacking in the feminine frailties and the contradictoriness of feminine resolves. Of Tasso's women De Sanctis justly observes that "while the tongue utters 'I hate,' the heart responds 'I love'". No small quantity of the *Faerie Queene* is suggested and directly inspired by Tasso's great poem,

is, in fact, an adaptation; some of it is nothing but metaphrase, as Fitzgerald called his own treatment of Calderon. "The Bowre of blis" is the Garden of Armida transplanted to English ground. The poets' poet gives us transcriptions that are rarely marred; sometimes they are improvements. Occasionally his work is beautiful translation, word for word. Compare, for example, such passages as these:—

Qual mattutina stella esce dell' onde
Rugiadosa e stillante; o come fuore
Spuntò nascendo già dalle feconde
Spume dell' Océan la Dea d'amore:
Tal apparve costei; tal le sue bionde
Chiome stillavan cristallino umore.

—*G. L.*, cant. xv., s. 60.

As that faire starre, the messenger of morn
His deawy face out of the sea doth reare;
Or as the Cyprian goddesse, newly borne
Of th' Ocean's fruitful froth, did first appeare:
Such seemèd they, and so their yellow heare
Christalline humor droppèd downe apace.

—*F. Q.*, b. ij., cant. ij., s. 65.

Rideva insieme, e insieme ella arrossia;
Ed era nel rossor più bello il riso,
E nel riso il rossor che le copria
Insino al mento il delicato viso.

—*G. L.*, cant. xv., s. 62.

Withall she laughèd, and she blusht withall,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing.

—*F. Q.*, b. ij., cant. ij., s. 68.

Deh mira, egli cantò, spuntar la rosa,
Dal verde suo modesta e verginella,
Che mezzo aperta ancora, e mezzo ascosa
Quanto si mostra men, tanto è più bella.
Ecco poi nudo il sen già baldanzosa
Dispiega; ecco poi langue, e non par quella,
Quella non par, che desïata avanti
Fu da mille donzelle e mille amanti.

Così trapassa al trapassar d'un giorno
Della vita mortale il fiore e'l verde;
Nè, perchè faccia indietro april ritorno,
Si rinfiora ella mai, nè si rinverde.
Cogliam la rosa in sul mattino adorno
Di questo dì, che tosto il seren perde;
Cogliam d'amor la rosa; amiamo or quando
Esser si puote rïamato amando.

—*G. L.*, cant. xvi., s. 14, 15.

The whiles some one did chaunt this lovely lay:
Ah! see whoso fayre thing doest faine to see,
In springing flowre the image of thy day.
Ah! see the Virgin Rose, how sweetly shee
Doth first peep foorth with bashfull modestee,
That fairer seemes the lesse ye see her may.
Lo! see soone after how more bold and free
Her bared bosome she doth broad display;
Lo! see soone after how she fades and falls away.

So passeth, in the passing of a day,
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre;
Ne more doth florish after first decay,
That earst was sought to deck both bed and bowre.
Of many a lady', and many a Paramowre.
Gather, therefore, the Rose whilest yet is prime,
For soone comes age that will her pride deflowre;
Gather the Rose of love whilest yet is time,
Whilest loving thou mayst lovèd be with equall crime.

—*F. Q.*, b. ij., cant. xii., s. 74, 75.

Tasso is more modern in spirit than his predecessors; he is more touching, more graceful, more refined; but he is a weaker man. We have said that the mantle of Ariosto fell on Tasso. Both wrote in a romantic spirit on romantic subjects. But if the essence of romance be a longing and striving after the unobtainable, the hallowing of an impossible ideal, if it be the preference of fantastic vision to reality, and the ignoring of the true proportion of things, then Tasso is more wilfully romantic than

Ariosto. Ariosto is a virile poet, full of vigour ~~and humour~~ and irony. The quality of Tasso's verse is mobile and almost feminine; it is sweet and delicate; it is full of delicious languors and gentle dreams and soft, low music, and there are "tears in the voice"; sometimes, too, it is decked in flimsy millinery of affectation.

The poets, great and small, had hitherto, for the most part, marched to heroic measures. Their notes were often dull; their colouring was often false, but they were a virile race. So has it always been with the very greatest. Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, are as the sun himself, full of generous heat, bestowing warmth and penetrative light on all they survey. The true kings of mind, alas! too few, are lords alike of the entire human heart and of their own soul. They hold both in sovereign subjection; they accede to the imperfections of their realm with royal humility; they accept their sceptre as of natural right; they subdue the real world as by divine prescription, and refashion it to the heart's desire, robing it with undreamed-of beauty, but retaining its mystery and deepening its shadows, even while they endow it with supernal light. Like Michelangelo they perceive in every stone the soul that it imprisons, and they liberate it by virtue of their creative office. To this great race Tasso did not belong. His is no eagle's wing to pierce the empyrean and rest, self-poised, in transcendent calm, hearkening the harmony of revolving worlds. There are depths of gloom he has never sounded, heights of glory to which he never aspired. Tasso scaled Parnassus but not Olympus, nor ever sat with Zeus in imperturbable calm. He wrote much pseudo-Platonism, but he was no real thinker, no sincere prober

for truth. And, if he was incapable of profound meditation, he was never swept away by great floods of passion. But he is past-master in the mysteries of soft and delicate feeling; he is visited by dazzling fancies; he is the captive of a new, delectable charm. His strength lies solely in vivid and exquisite sensibility; he never exhibits true virile force of intellect or godlike flash of will. He is a man enthralled by his own emotions, that excite the play of a powerful caprice; his verse sparkles with felicitous expression, and he is very sensitive to the music of words. He is as some sylvan god that visits the naiads of pleasant streams and listens to their sweet murmurings and the melancholy whisperings of the woods that tell of the dejection of lovers and the tristful lot of men. He is, in a certain sense, an egoist, feeling, suffering, enduring much. He is keenly alive to the joy of life, but is most moved by its sadness; and pathos is always mingled with the rapture of his song. Tasso was incapable of losing himself in frank-hearted enjoyment like Boccaccio and Ariosto; he was equally incapable of subduing self in disinterested devotion like Filippo Neri. There were in him strands of both sinner and saint, but he was too good to be a complete sinner, too weak to be a complete saint.

There is much rare and delicious poetry that is made of beautiful dreams only, wherein the flitting shades are merely the reflection of the sad suspirations of their begetter, or embody his own joy and desire. Such is Tasso's verse. With the first beginnings of the modern spirit, in the twelfth century, a new and romantic sensitiveness appeared. The troubadours are love's sufferers, and they

exaggerate and distort the passion they feel. The abasement of Petrarch before a woman whom he might woo but never win would have been inconceivable by Homer and repugnant to Virgil and the love poets of antiquity, a theme for contemptuous silence or Titanic derision. Tasso is the lineal descendant of the troubadours, but he belongs to an age less simple and less sincere. The scion of Provençal poets has become a sensitive, wavering soul, on whom rude wind or gentle breeze may play as on an Æolian harp; he is the victim of life, not its conqueror, and he nurtures and fondles his torture or his joy. He relieves himself of an excess of sensibility in the rapture or sadness of song; he is too egoistic to be capable of true creation, of absolute dramatic vision: his soul wails and ripples in a sea of feeling.

Tasso was the spiritual father of the long line of sentimentalists—a race in whom feeling predominates over intellect—a race to which, nonetheless, great men belong—Byron and Keats, Rousseau and Sénancour, Heine and Richter and Leopardi, men that bore through Europe "the pageant of their bleeding heart"; a race, too, that numbers a horde of pigmy poetasters, who pipe because they are ignorant of all proportion, and because there is in them no quietude of soul. Tasso was a sentimentalist to the core—the first of his dynasty, and by no means the feeblest.

But if the *Gerusalemme* inaugurated the reign of a new spirit in art, it is also a valediction, a sigh for the vanishing fulness of joy. Tasso sang the swan-song of the Renascence. The great day was dying, and, in the gathering gloom of its wan, sad eventide, the languid air

was startled by a ravishing, unfamiliar melody. It was the farewell of an era as it passed into the nothingness which is the destiny of all living and lovely days and things, that only leave behind them a faded memory and an obscure suggestion of their sweetness.

CHAPTER IX

GATHERING CLOUDS

Tasso's Disturbed State of Mind—Matrimonial Relations of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino—Murder of Ercole Contrari—The Sentiment of Honour—Francesco Maria II., Duke of Urbino—Sperone Speroni at Rome—Literati at Siena—Barbara Sanseverino and Leonora di Scandiano—Orazio Ariosto—Allegorised Poems—Scandal Concerning Tarquinia Molza—Quarrel with the Fucci—Poetic Sensibilities

FOR years Tasso had led a life of uninterrupted strain. The excessive study of early youth was followed by a long period of whirling excitement. Imagine the jading effects of a London season prolonged throughout the entire year and continued from year to year, and that will give some idea of what life at the court of Ferrara was. The visits to the island-villa of Belriguardo, to the gardens of Belvedere, to the hunting-grounds of Mesola, to the fisheries of Comacchio, to the courts of foreign princes, were but other forms of a prolonged delirium, a restless pursuit of pleasure. And the duty of the perfect courtier was, not merely to divert himself, but to aid in every festivity, to follow the inner workings of every mind, to counteract machinations against himself and to counteract them by tact and intrigue, and, above all, to dance attendance and hang on the sleeve of his prince, to simulate devotion (though that is readily excited by the powerful), to flatter men of influence and woo court ladies

with honied verse, to strive without ceasing to be foremost in the prescribed etiquette of affectation, to awaken the Muse on demand at inauspicious hours, to enact the infatuated lover and sing a passion for some lady when the only thing really near his heart was the fame that might accrue from success in such sonneteering. Add to the distraction of this animated, unnatural life a passion for study that demanded gratification; an ambition for the renown that had not yet been obtained; add to the scholar's thirst for knowledge the poet's visitations from a more spiritual world. And this was not the whole of Tasso's life. His brain was on fire with the *Gerusalemme*. Amid all the bustle of court life there came silent hours, that should have been given to sleep, and then radiant phantoms of the imagination visited him, floating in an atmosphere of music, and, as he saw and heard, he was under compulsion to set down some semblance of the ecstatic vision, some silver-toned echo of the song; then he must revise and re-revise until the record bore some correspondence with his mood. He had "warmed both hands ~~at~~ the fire of life" with all the extravagant energy of youth; and now a strain that might have borne down the strongest began to tell on his high-strung brain. Moreover, he had been prostrated for months at a time by a malady that henceforth clung to him, and that he could in nowise shake off — that fatal Italian fever so prevalent among the marshes where he dwelt, a sickness that results in poverty of blood and exhaustion of the nervous system. There is no discoverable history of mental or nervous disease in Tasso's family. But as a lad he had been overtaxed; he had been subjected

to more than one shock in the impressionable years; he had shared some of his father's depressing poverty; his adolescence had been full of unhealthy excitement; he had been plunged into an overbearing flood of life in his maturer years; and he had overwrought his brain. He began to exhibit significant symptoms. He became over-sensitive, imagining slights where none were intended, and on the look-out for any signs of neglect. Egoism is often the leading characteristic of too sensitive an organisation. Egoism distorts one's perception of true proportions and is the chief predisposing cause of unsoundness of mind. Tasso, like so many imaginative and emotional people, was vain and self-centred: he began to believe that everybody must be thinking about him. Before long he imagined that everybody was plotting against him, even those from whom he had received conspicuous kindness: the clearest evidences of true friendship counted for naught. He became discontented with the Duke, with the court, with Ferrara; he became restless, irresolute, now desiring to change his service, now resolved to stay on where he was. He pined for compassion, and poured forth pathetic tales of woe in letters that are marked by plausibility and apparent candour. So specious are they, and so endowed by his genius with charm, that they deceived many of his contemporaries and mystified generations of acute minds.

His feverish activity continued, but he found the last three cantoes of the *Gerusalemme* difficult to finish. He discussed philosophical subtleties with the members of the academies with unabated vigour; he still sought the distractions of gaiety; he still furnished the court and

its ladies with adulatory poems that, being so good, were of course, in constant request. Then, at last, an instinct of self-preservation urged him to cut himself loose, and he went to Vicenza, to his friend Ottavio Thiene, Count of Scandiano and feudatory of Ferrara. Thence he proceeded to Padua, but there was no quiet there, for, besides being welcomed by his old friends and masters, there was the intellectual excitement of debates with the "Animosi," an academy that had succeeded the "Eterei". He disliked the idea of returning to Ferrara, and wrote to his friend Scipione Gonzaga, begging him to use his influence to get him into the service of Francesco de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, or the Cardinal Ferdinando, his brother.

Few actions could have been less wise, or, indeed, less safe. For, in spite of intermarriages, there was deep and bitter feud between the proud ancient line of Este and the upstart descendants of money-lending clothiers, the race whose heraldry of gilded pills still hangs over the door of the London pawnbroker. What were the Medici, though they had married their daughters to princes? And to crown all, had they not inclined to the Spaniard in the struggle for Italy, while the Estensi had supported the French? Now, the Spaniard was triumphant, and owing to his influence, in 1569, only six years ago, the ruler of Tuscany had been raised above the ruler of Ferrara, to the greater rank of *Grand* Duke.

So mordant was the rivalry for precedence between the houses that it had led to at least one unseemly and awkward episode. There had been a moment of truce, and a double wedding was arranged. Duke Alfonso was

to lead poor little Barbara of Austria to the altar at the same time that Francesco, the heir to the Tuscan throne, was to take her sister thither. Francesco and Cardinal Luigi both claimed precedence, and each tried to shove himself past the other. Court manners were forgotten, and the natural man shone forth; nay, both behaved with such uncontrollable rudeness, that the ceremony had to be abandoned and the princesses were packed off to their respective destinations to be married there.

A new worry now entered Tasso's soul. He began to be unduly fearful of what the religious censors might say of his poem. As nearly always happens in an unsound condition of mind, these fancies were a gratuitous superstructure on real fact. The Council of Trent had forged shackles for the human mind which the Inquisition was not slow to apply. And the power and activity of the Inquisition were increasing. It had become supreme even over the Pope. Tasso feared lest his poem should be suppressed. Though he had obtained much praise, he had also been rather severely dealt with by critical scholars, to whom, after the fashion of the times, he had submitted his still unpublished poem in fragments, sending a canto or two to this learned acquaintance, and a canto or two to that, as he composed them. And he was not only fearful of how ecclesiastical authority might deal with the *Gerusalemme:* he began to worry himself about the state of his own soul. No one was more attentive to religious observance than Tasso. He confessed and received the Sacrament regularly, and gave alms, that he could ill spare, to the poor. He had never

indulged in any real freedom of thought. Yet there had been moments when he wondered at the Incarnation, doubted the particular direction of human affairs by the Deity, felt sickened at the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, speculated as to the destiny of the soul and questioned its eternity. But this child of the Renascence had received his early education at the hands of Jesuit fathers; he belonged to the age of Carlo Borromeo and Filippo Neri, and he had earnestly striven, according to his lights, to hold his faith fast and to improve his own character and life. Yet it may be questioned whether a fear of hell was not the chief activity in his religion.

The onset of mental disease was accompanied by a perplexing phenomenon. He still retained his power of disentangling what his genius required from the ironical ravel that we call experience. He could still weave what unmouldered threads and unsullied colours he might discover therein into fresh and almost faultless designs.

The Duke observed his state of mind. This autocratic and punctilious prince, to whom a solecism was a dire offence, and who visited negligence in attire with his serious displeasure, was so charmed by Tasso's personality, or hoped such renown for himself when the poem should have received all its finishing touches and be published, that he treated him with rare tenderness and consideration. He sent him to the delightful villa of Belriguardo for change and quiet. Probably desire to preserve his promising satellite in full brilliancy was the chief motive that influenced Alfonso. For he was not a sympathetic prince. Four years later, at a grand spectacular tournament, lighted by a thousand torches, a wooden castle

caught fire. Four of the combatants, belonging to the noblest families in Ferrara, leaped into the moat, and, weighed down by their armour, were drowned. Their relatives, who were among the actors, withdrew, and all was confusion. The Duchess wished the tourney to end, but the Archduke Charles of Austria was present, and Alfonso insisted that the entertainment should proceed.

Tasso's condition did not improve at Belriguardo. He was visited there by "horrible soundings of the last trump, and saw God sitting in the clouds and heard Him say, 'Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire'. And," he writes, "this terror pressed on me so heavily that I could not but confide in some friend or acquaintance, and, if I failed to confess any sin, however trivial, from forgetfulness or shame, I used to repeat the confession to a priest over and over, as well as the general confession." One day he started in eager haste for Bologna. He must consult the Inquisitor there. Fortunately he went to a wise man who gave him plenty of occupation in the way of religious exercises. Tasso's mind was so disturbed at Bologna that he only visited one old friend, Diomede Borghesi, and he soon returned to Ferrara to receive more vexatious criticisms from his learned friends. But he seems also to have received much kindness from the members of the court, especially from the Princess Lucrezia, now become Duchess of Urbino by the death of Duke Guidobaldo. He became somewhat more soothed, and wrote to Scipione Gonzaga that he could not disguise his ambition; many had read his poem with delight, and the knowledge gave him untold satisfaction. He also writes to the same friend that the Duchess of Urbino is

taking mineral waters brought from Lucca (she had sore eyes and a weak stomach) and requires to be entertained, so he is with her, *tête-à-tête*, in her chamber every day. There is a false and unworthy implication in the boast.

For Tasso was not the only gentleman who was admitted to sit with the princess "*in secretis*". There was another courtier, one who did not visit her merely to read poems.

Poor Lucrezia had been forced on an unwilling husband. The marriage turned out miserably. Immediately after the wedding, Francesco Maria slipped away from Ferrara, leaving his wife behind him. He sought excitement at the wars, amusement with other ladies, anything rather than her society. Such strange indifference, not to speak of the discourtesy he showed to a great House, set tongues a-wagging. The ambassador from Urbino to Ferrara wrote to Francesco Maria's father that folk were wondering when the Prince would come back to fetch his wife and take her to her new home. The Prince was expostulated with, but he paid no heed. He set off for the dissipations of Paris.

There could have been no offence so sore done to a princess of so ancient and haughty a House. Moreover, Lucrezia was a woman to the core, suffering from the first signs of the passage of the years; she was losing the freshness of face and the lithe softness of line—that grace of youth, the departure of which is an infliction that women endure, but of which they are none the less painfully conscious. Occasionally, it is true, the ill-matched pair dwelt together for a while. But in 1573, Lucrezia, who was in poor health, made the excuse of going to Ferrara for

change of air and did not return. How little this affected her husband is manifest in his diary. He always wrote of himself therein in the third person as befitted his magnificence, and he says that the "desire of the Duchess to return to Ferrara and her determination to remain there gave no annoyance to her husband; for, as she was unlikely to bring him a family, her absence was not of much moment. Due provision was arranged quite amicably, and they continued to conduct themselves towards one another quite in a courteous way." At the period we have reached Lucrezia was forty-one years of age, had been married five years, and was childless.

Now there was a certain nobleman of Ferrara, one Ercole Contrari, who, years ago, so it was whispered, had not been wholly indifferent to the Princess, nor she to him. It was believed, not only that they had been mutually attracted but that there had been actual love passages between them. The Contrari were an ancient and powerful house; but the line of Este wedded with the sons and daughters of reigning sovereigns, and a matrimonial alliance between the Estensi and the Contrari would have been unthinkable.

Contrari was in the habit of visiting the grass-widow in secret and alone. Perhaps they became too sure that there was no suspicion abroad, and relaxed their vigilance. But there were scandalous tongues at work, and some tale-bearer conveyed a hint to Duke Alfonso. It is said that Cardinal Luigi urged Alfonso to repair the injured honour of his House. Whether it was so or not, the Duke decided that honour called upon him to act. The Duke was indeed a feudatory of the Pope, but each of the

ALFONSO II OF FERRARA

FROM A CONTEMPORARY PRINT. BRITISH MUSEUM

princelets of Italy was still pretty well full master of his domain and especially of his own home. The sentiment of the noble class demanded, then, that honour should be avenged. The growing regard for the routine of law and the loss of some princely independence, required that what was to be done should be done secretly. And the deed must be performed in such a way as to avoid further scandal.

The Duke first, by direst threat and the exercise of a powerful will, extracted confessions from Curzio Forni, a friend of Contrari and Borso Trolli, the foster-brother of Lucrezia. Both of these men were accessory to the intrigue. He compelled them to vow that they would observe silence, and he ordered them to meet him in a certain chamber at a certain hour. They found the room that was appointed for Contrari's doom occupied by Pigna, the Prime Minister, Count Palla Strozzi, the master of cavalry, and Burrino, "Cavalier of the Cord" —in others words, the public strangler. That day the Duke chatted with Contrari in a most friendly manner, and, taking him by the arm, led him to the room where these gentlemen were. Contrari had no suspicions. Suddenly some one threw a cloth over the victim's head, some one else pinioned his arms, and the gentleman of the cord rapidly adjusted and tightened the noose. There was little movement, less noise, and soon there was perfect quiet. Then the courtiers placed the body on a couch, and the court was summoned by cries that simulated astonishment and grief. The Duke and his accomplices declared that Contrari had fallen dead of an apoplexy. The ducal carriage was ordered and the body of

the dead man conveyed to his palace. Two days afterwards it was honourably buried.

But the world refused to swallow the ducal lie. It had to be admitted that Contrari had been killed. It was alleged that he had caused Luigi Gonzaga to be wantonly and unjustifiably murdered by hirelings, and that he had secured the escape of his *bravi* when he was commanded to render them up to justice. This apology was accepted by historians until damning documents that gave us the real facts were quite recently disinterred from the dust of the archives where they reposed.

When Lucrezia heard of the death of her lover, at first she could not believe it, and when she became assured of its truth, her grief was uncontrollable, and everybody suspected its cause. Henceforth she bore in her breast an undying hatred to her brother, the Duke, and her family—a hatred that she was at no pains to conceal. Alfonso said that she detested him "because he had snatched fruit from her hand that she loved very injudiciously, and she could not deny it". Twenty-two years later she still nourished such rancour against the whole brood of the Estensi that she aided the Pope, who was nothing loath, to resume the full sovereignty of Ferrara, to which, indeed, he was entitled by the demise of Alfonso without direct heirs.

Francesco Maria is said to have upbraided his Duchess for her infidelity, though he had small justification, and his own misdeeds were many. He was a good ruler, never outraging the laws of Urbino by the commission of any violence or crime. But this somewhat prosaic student of natural history was, at that time, as loose in sexual

morals as the other great people of his period. In other respects he went as regularly as clock-work, and, indeed, was as accurate a recorder of time. Later on he became a model of austere virtue, and very devout. His diary records that on 13th August, 1587, he "finished reading the Bible with various commentaries on it, in which study I have been engaged three years ten months"; and, on the 9th September, 1598, we read: "Finished reading the Bible through in eight years, and it was the second time; and that with the comments of Dionisio Cartusiano". The Duke was evidently proud of his feat. In 1588, too, he records that he "finished the six volumes of the lives of saints collected by Lorenzo Surio; and I did it in four years".

But at this period Francesco Maria was still in the bonds of iniquity. On the resumption of marital life Lucrezia found herself suffering from an unspeakable disease of which her husband was the cause, and the popular voice said that it was designed. The discovery nearly broke the proud daughter of the D'Este, and another separation followed. The Prince speaks in one of his letters of the scandal that this produced, and urges that the separation is undesirable for reasons of State, that it hurts his own self-esteem, and that he is very desirous to resume relations, though, indeed, they had commenced in scorn enough. In 1577, a papal order reached Lucrezia to rejoin her husband, but she disregarded it, though by this time she and Alfonso's last duchess were at daggers drawn, and the Tuscan envoy tells his master that they "were like two vipers trying to kill one another". The outraged woman tried to forget,

and abandoned herself to a life of pleasure. She secured a new lover in one Luigi Montecuccoli. The Duke got to know of this liaison also, and he told the Princess Leonora and other ladies all about it, a recital which Leonora heard with real or affected disbelief. This time he did not attempt to avenge the outraged honour of the Estensi.

Egoism and fear of derision were at the bottom of this same "honour". Its many manifestations have all been curious outgrowths of self-love and social pride, commingling with other feelings.[1]

There was no great development of the sentiment in mediæval Italy. For chivalry was an importation from across the mountains; knighthood was often self-conferred or bestowed on any prominent cobbler or tailor, and the sons of ancient families were wont to ride over the Alpine passes to be instructed in its devoirs and invested with its insignia at the hands of those who understood them. But desire to belong to an aristocratic class never became quite extinct in Italy, and it was fostered by the presence of proud and ancient families of Teutonic origin that ruled at Ferrara and in Romagna and elsewhere. The great invasions of French, German and Spanish monarchs and their chivalry revived the dying flame, and finally Spanish predominance introduced Spanish manners, and the ruling and noble classes in Italy became impregnated with the modes of feeling and the prejudices of their conquerors.

[1] The element of class-feeling in the composite sentiment of honour was pointed out to me by Professor Carveth Read through the kind offices of my friend Professor J. Sully.

In mediæval Italy little can be discovered of the chivalric sentiment of honour save one base root—the disagreeableness of being found out. Usually the adulterous wife is executed only when her offence is likely to bring ridicule on the husband. The injury done to the egoistic emotion by being less highly thought of by the world would seem to have been the soil on which foreign seed fell and flourished. Before that time the laxity of morals that followed the transformation of the Pope into a mere territorial prince, the decay of religion, and the intellectual scepticism and tolerance of the Renascence led to connubial laxity, and the "honour" of the husband is chiefly apparent when the irregularities of his spouse are town-talk. But there was a nucleus of class pride and personal pride around which all kinds of moral feelings and idealistic sentiments tended to crystallise. When the Spaniard came to Italy carrying his quixotic development of honour with him, the sentiment which grows up so naturally in the mind was intensified and it exploded in a positive delirium. The history of thought shows us how the unsubduable spirit of man for ever

> Beats its unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,

and is ever ready to build, even on the baser things of nature, some high temple of the heart. It is the spirit of the symposium and the Phædrus. It is the spirit that gave rise to the worship of woman in the Middle Ages. It is the spirit that engendered the sentiment of honour. Egoistic feeling, reinforced by class-sentiment, now aspired to become a theory of abstract duty. When class-feeling became the ruling power in the breast, honour

sprang to the front, and was both sublimated by religious feeling and influenced it. "O true Honour" (it is the apostrophe of Guarini), "master of great souls, form noble aspirations in our hearts. O sovereign of kings, come back to our habitations, who have no blessedness without thee! Let thy good awake from their deadly sleep those whom base and unworthy desires turn from thy service, that they may achieve the glory of the men of old;" and again, "a well-born soul can have no better protection than his honour". The Catholic Reformation tended to exalt female chastity, and Guarini's heroine in "Il Pastor Fido" appeals to her too-ardent suitor to "respect honour, if you love me".

The power of the Italian noble had been curtailed. He was no longer the executor of justice. Italy was composed of large states now, and they were in the grasp of Spain. Her potentates had to subdue individual caprice to the exigencies of statute law. The brutalities of the Middle Ages were restrained; but the petty feudatory, shorn of his power, often effected through hired assassins the vengeance he craved. A generation or two before, the Medici of Florence, the Petrucci of Siena, would have been very much of Falstaff's advice, and esteemed honour as "air"; but now men never hesitated to gratify a new enthusiasm for a new sentiment by the only means left to them, and that illegal. The Italian gentleman of the sixteenth century felt certain stains as keenly as wounds; and the growing respect for female relatives and family pride had this consequence, that any unfaithfulness on the part of a wife or any unchastity on the part of a sister were visited by the speedy

removal of the suspected lover, and in time it became *de rigeur* that she also should pay for her fault by death. The restriction of the power of the nobles to their own domestic circle and the growth of honour provided the world with a terrible series of family tragedies which struck the imagination of our English dramatists and gave us "Othello," and "The White Devil," and "The Duchess of Malfi". The convictions or affectations of the Catholic reaction reinforced the notion of honour to the protection of woman, and so tended towards her seclusion. No wonder, then, that, nursing such sentiments, the Duke, still well-nigh master in his own house, murdered Ercole Contrari.

Much as Duchess Lucrezia was affected by the murder of Contrari, she still took a close interest in Torquato. He confided to her that he wanted to go to Rome, and she did her best to dissuade him. The whole House of Este continued to be solicitous for his welfare, particularly Lucrezia and the Duke; the former, because she had a genuine liking for the poet; the latter, not without an eye to his own glory when the *Gerusalemme* should be completely revised and published. Lucrezia took Tasso with her to Pesaro for a change. He had constant headache, and the movement of his limbs was uncertain; he forgets to date his letters and often misdates them; he is convinced that there must be much in magic and the black art, for he has such sad experience of their power. Quite suddenly he steals away to Rome, making the Jubilee his excuse.

At this moment Pigna died. As yet there was little in Tasso's mind or manner to prevent his succession to

one, at least, of the numerous offices held by the late Prime Minister, who had been at once ducal secretary, official philosopher, historiographer and stipendiary poet. But all this is naught to Tasso. And, what was likely to make matters worse with the Estensi, he heads for Florence instead of going straight to Rome, having provided himself with a letter of introduction from Bernardo Canigiani, the Florentine representative at Ferrara, to Father Vincenzo Borghini, who was employing himself in exposing errors in Pigna's *History of the Princes of Este* and indulging in a polemic against that House. Arrived at Rome, he waited on Cardinal Albano, and must needs be presented to Cardinal de' Medici. All this soon got known at Ferrara, where the news was certainly not grateful to the rival House, that had given him nothing but kindness and expected to reap a reward in fame when the great poem should appear. He used to spend his evenings at Rome with old Sperone Speroni, and that arbiter of letters gave him drastic treatment for the excess of conceits and certain effeminacies in his poem—criticisms not undeserved, for there is much in the *Gerusalemme* that heralds decay. Tasso's temperament was not of the quality to give the world the true heroic, and though he delineated character more subtly than Ariosto, though he had developed an almost morbid perception of the conflict between natural impulse and social and religious restraints, he was rhetorical and often affected, and the richness of episode, the fascinations of sense, the broad full music, did not compensate in the old man's judgment for a certain redundancy and vagueness of diction and excess of ornament. Fourteen years after-

wards one Verdizzotti wrote a work *Della Nuova Poesia*, an imaginary discourse, wherein he makes the great literary Pope express a wish that "by God's grace the rare genius of Torquato Tasso may not be turned away as by an unkindly breeze, by the sweetness and facility of our tongue, to his own undoing, in graceful digressions incongruous with the requirements of the heroic". Tasso was not unaware of this besetting danger. He says that "the ancients were kept within bounds by the nature of the hexameter, but our hendecasyllables pave the way to embellishment".

Tasso soon became restless at Rome, and we find him on the wing to Siena, where he would exchange bustle for quiet. For Siena is a city that takes a peaceful tribute of the pure air from mountain and sea, and sits on her silent hill-top as some sculptured goddess on a throne: like one of Tasso's own warrior maidens, she is close-clad in armour that only makes her dainty beauty appear more fair. For many centuries she had carried on almost perpetual warfare with the sister-cities around her, coveting their possessions or defending her own; but now, after a last heroic defence, she was become the chattel of Francesco I., himself the placeman of Spain. Tasso's object in visiting Siena was to seek out Monsignore Piccolomini, the commentator on Aristotle, who pursued his peaceful studies in this most winsome of all the fair Tuscan towns.

Even in these later unhallowed days, Euterpe and Eurato still haunt the Tuscan vales, and love-poetry, the improvisation of peasant lads and maidens, echoes among the hills in the spring time, mingling with the bleating of sheep and goats and the music of bright pleasant

streams. In the sixteenth century Siena was a poetic arbour, and all the minor poets of the city, as well as all its learned people hastened to do Tasso honour. He seems to have been in improved health, for he made many new friends, adding thereby to his already large circle of correspondence; then, leaving them a canto of his poem for discussion and critical remark, he continued his journey and reached Florence.

Tasso had paid a hurried visit to Florence before, when he set out on this journey, but now he was in better health than then, and he was taken to see many of the sights of that matchless city. Also, he discussed many points in his poem with Vincenzo Borghini, who had committed the onslaught on the Estensi. Borghini was a learned Benedictine monk; he had commentated Boccaccio, and he and Tasso held much discourse on the language of the poem. Then Tasso crossed over the Apennines to Pesaro again, and so back to Ferrara.

He was esteemed somewhat formidable in the quasi-philosophical disputations then so fashionable, but the sapience of philosophers lies, not infrequently, less concealed in their speech than in their conduct. They have rarely been noted for practical wisdom. The visits to Florence and Rome were so unwise that the Duchess Leonora had in vain tried to restrain Tasso from going. Ferdinando, Cardinal de' Medici, had received him in Rome; and the jealousy of the House of Este was very great; so great that, as we have said, it probably inspired Alfonso's wild candidature for the throne of Hungary. For then, as a king, he would have taken precedence of the Grand Duke. But everything was forgiven to so

promising a scholar as Tasso, a man who had already in some measure restored the fading glories of Ferrara, and who might even come to rival the divine Ariosto in fame. Moreover, much may be forgiven to poets, and especially to a high-strung poet in a state of nervous excitement, a man, too, who had exhibited serious instability of mind. But though resentment was concealed, perhaps lest Tasso should again contrive to escape and increase the lustre of the rival court, it can hardly have failed to lurk. That journey was remembered. A courtier was always surrounded by false friends, men ready to desert him in his hour of need, men who were skilful in concealing jealousy and spite behind a smiling mask, men who would be only too ready to undermine the shaken foundations of a rival. It is marvellous to find what real good will Tasso's co-courtiers, Pigna, Guarini and Montecatini, bore him. They had, indeed, little to envy as far as status went. But as poet and scholar, he was their rival, and there must have been something very winning about Tasso's personality to gain and hold so many friends and well-wishers as he did.

It was now the end of the year. There was so little resentment manifested that Tasso felt bound to apply for one of the posts left vacant by the death of Pigna. It was the one he hoped would be denied him—that of ducal historian. It implied the carrying on of Pigna's *History of the Estensi* from the point where he had left it. Tasso was still vacillating of purpose and restless in mind: he hankered after the service of the Medici, and to treat of Leo X. and Clement VII., Popes of that House, in the manner the Estensi would require, would for ever bar the

way to the gratification of this whim. Tasso confesses: "I am always wavering, and this disposition of mine is unconquerable; it cannot but bring defeat to all my projects".

The office was bestowed on him, whereupon he trusts to glide over certain difficulties in his task, hoping they would not be observed. Meanwhile, he was worrying himself with religious scruples again, and he sought help and advice from the Holy Office at Ferrara. And all the time he was called upon, as usual, to burn the candle at both ends. The poor poet, harried by religious tormentings, worried by his own doubts and other people's criticisms concerning his still unpublished poem, busy in better moments revising it and adding final touches, discontented and unhappy in his situation, had none the less to sing new songs for new ladies for whom he did not care a rush. Few men have ever been more possessed by filial piety than Tasso: few men were held in such light chains by love. "I never directed a resolute desire towards a fixed object," he sings, "not love's burning ardours, but fickle fancies were mine."

Never was Ferrara gayer than after the Contrari tragedy. There arrived two ladies who eclipsed all the belles of the court: they were as vivacious as they were beautiful; capable of reciting the verses of Ariosto, of dancing gracefully and of making the most of life, like all the cultivated women of the time. They vied even with the sportive Marfisa in that *gaieté de cœur* that everybody cultivated with such strenuous pains. One of these ladies was the Countess Barbara Sanseverino of Sala; the other was her step-daughter Leonora, the wife of Giulio Thiene,

Count of Scandiano, who was one of the Duke's feudatories and an old friend of Tasso. Barbara Sanseverino was renowned for her beautiful hair, which she wore gathered into a sort of crown; the younger lady, for the pouting of an exquisite lip. The Duke of Parma, Vincenzo Gonzaga (the heir to the throne of Mantua, a rakish and dissolute young prince), and even Duke Alfonso, were the avowed love-servitors of the young stepmother. Leonora di Scandiano had all the princes and nobles of Ferrara at her feet. The court was in constant revel; never were banquets spread so luxuriously; the viol squeaked and pipes whistled merrily, and courtiers pirouetted to their dames in the dance, now advancing, now retiring, now leaping gracefully aside. No romps were these, but dramas of action, representing the rejection of the suitor, the despair of hopeless love, the renewal of a lady's grace. The cavalier had every opportunity to manifest proficiency in a fine art; he could cut courtly capers of his own devising; nor did any gentleman aspire to more than a momentary touch of a lady's hand. All ended with a torch-dance. All the merry-makers bore flambeaux, and the festival was closed by their simultaneous extinction. Guarini and Ascanio Giraldini had returned from a mission to Poland anent Alfonso's hopeless attempt to obtain the crown of that country, and were masters of these latest revels, whereof these new ladies were always the fair stars and whereat they were duly hymned.

What a world of fictitious allurement, of fanciful gallantry, of simulated longings, of polite affectation it was! What jealousies, what disappointments, bitter heart-burnings, silent melancholy, nay, what dark secrets, what

tragedies lay under the fair outward show of these Italian courts! What cankers at the core! Mediæval man was only half-civilised, and, during the Renascence, passion still flared up like flax. Would you know how hearts beat in the sixteenth century? You will find it recorded by Shakespeare and his mates: see there, how little passion was restrained, how on a sudden it flared, and what a hollow mask all this polite behaviour could be; what angry and violent passions, what malevolence and brutality it could cover! This same Countess of Scandiano had a sister Giulia married to Count Giovanni Borromeo. Borromeo belonged to the same family as the holy Archbishop of Milan and his no less saintly and even more learned cousin, Federigo. The couple were seated at table and indulged in a matrimonial squabble. The Count rose in wrath and stabbed his wife three times, dealing wounds each one of which was a mortal one. In one noble family alone and their relatives by marriage, it is recorded that eleven murders were perpetrated in half a century, seven of them being for sexual irregularities.

Of course it was Tasso's duty to compliment the beautiful visitors with his sweet, facile verse. So, to please their sincere admirer, the Duke, he and Guarini clashed their wits together, and from the mock contest there rang out a duel of compliment. Tasso appears to have had some temporary return of gaiety just now; and, for the moment, his religious misgivings were in abeyance. The ebbing tide of the Renascence still flowed in his veins, though it was early checked by Jesuit training and later by formalistic repression. His character had a double side, nowhere more apparent than in his letters. He

wrote cryptic verses, that might have been inscribed on the Arcana of a Cyprian temple; lyrics, modelled after Pagan examples, that might belong to the heyday of the Renascence.

Tasso played the platonic lover himself. It is difficult for us, to-day, quite to understand the mental and emotional attitude of love's servitor. He practised a refined art, proceeding by gradual steps and at long intervals, if the lady was generous, to marks of intimacy, but on this side of honesty, if he and she were platonic lovers in very truth. The lover still affected to be drawn as by a star to the highest heavens, and battered himself into the belief that the secrets of celestial perfection, denied to the carnal man, were revealed to him. But the angel in man has feet of clay, that often precipitate him to that earth whereof they are akin. The theory of the courtly service of woman, a theory that helped Dante and many another out of the dark wood, though, like chivalry, its spirit was well-nigh exhausted, is very well set forth by a contemporary of Tasso, a Ferrarese noble, named Count Annibale Romei. Romei wrote certain discourses, supposed to take place between Guarini and other wits and the court beauties. He imitates that popular work the *Cortigione* of Castiglione, and he says: "For love to resolve itself into desire, the reason must grant permission; but, if loveliness hath taken up her abode in a palace too lofty, such as a princess, the hope of a union in mutual love being forbidden by the ruling light of the intellect, the affection becomes not amorous desire but is merged in deepest reverence".

Tasso certainly became "merged in deepest reverence"

by the charms of the young Countess di Scandiano, who, when her stepmother left the court, was the cynosure of all eyes. But if the mistress granted him no grace, he was quite content with kisses from her maid. In fact he tells us that, if he "dare not raise his hopes so high as the Countess he will not disdain the condescensions of her gentlewoman". The lady was a dark beauty, and would seem to have been coy rather than severe. Tasso, in a canzone, compliments La Scandiano on her coldness, but urges the maid not to imitate her mistress, but be less disdainful and more kind. The poem "born of passion and celestial ardour, will hide itself in the beloved bosom, veiled from man and heaven; but, if indeed it must reveal itself, let it be only to those that have had experience of love, and let not our gentle prattle reach the ears of the strict". The canzone was not destined to repose in the beloved bosom alone: it was not intended for merely private consumption; else how did Orazio Ariosto come to see it? Orazio, a lad of twenty, was a grand-nephew of the famous Ludovico Ariosto, the poet, and inherited something of the broad sunshine of his ancestor, as well as a little of his poetic faculty. The lad had a faculty of getting into scrapes and even into prison. This mad wag sent a copy of the verses to Luca Scalabrino, pretending that they were his own. Whereupon Tasso, with all the vanity of a versemaker, grew very angry, and wrote to Scalabrino claiming authorship under the guise of an apology; for "in these correct days it hardly befits a man, over thirty, to write loose rhymes, and indeed his (Orazio's) aim is to injure my reputation. However that may be, the canzone is mine, and perchance without my

declaring so, you knew it for mine." He goes on to beg Scalabrino to show it to his friend, Scipione Gonzaga (though, as an ecclesiastic, he surely ought to have been one of "the strict"!); and indeed Orazio's joke was an excellent advertisement, and the "gentle prattle" was pretty widely read.

The young scapegrace Orazio was a man of parts, and by his youth, intelligence and lively disposition seems to have endeared himself to Tasso. Nay, there are certain scandalous letters concerning him that Tasso wrote, without any sense of shame, to that tolerant Churchman and patient, much-enduring friend, Gonzaga. They throw a lurid light on the morals of the times. The revival of learning and the discovery of the great literature and pulsating life of the Past, revealed it as a time when men sought and enjoyed the fulness of life. The Renascence, while it liberated the "angels that soar," had also let loose the "devils that lurk". Even its best effort was, after all, far more a pursuit of the beautiful than a search for the good and true. New wine was poured into old bottles; each man did as seemed good in his own eyes; religion became a mere bundle of formalistic observances; there was no cementing bond in society, and before the public conscience could evolve a new moral order, the foreigner was upon Italy, and she was suffocated by the coercion of Spain and the Council of Trent. The Renascence had time to corrupt the old order; it had not time to evolve a new synthesis. The *milieu* of certain works of Plato was reproduced. Mysterious passions that lurked throughout the Middle Ages and that were encouraged by commerce with the East, announced themselves boldly

in the fifteenth century, and were endowed with a semblance of grace and refinement by the Italian mind, to which vice, in its naked brutality, was repugnant. They persisted through the sixteenth century; they disgraced the courts of Paris and London; their pale, dubious presence is reflected in the sonnets of what is, perhaps, the healthiest mind of all time.

Tasso was far less vicious than most of his contemporaries; his confessor said that from the age of thirty-five he kept himself free from each mortal sin, but his mind was now distempered, and he had a passing inclination to imitate the ancients at their worst. It is a period in his life when reckless confidence alternates with unwarranted suspicion; brief outbursts of exaltation with melancholy dread. Tasso could be singularly outspoken; Gonzaga seems to have been of the temperament to invite the fullest confidence. Indeed, the ears of the men of the century (Saints and Inquisitors not excepted) were strangely tolerant.

Tasso was less easy to get on with than usual just now. He was irritated by the malevolent envy of the literati. Sperone Speroni and the pedants mauled him severely. It was his own fault: he had followed the fashion and sent specimens of his work for criticism, and if he got more than he required of it, it was because, with the vanity of an author, he had distributed his manuscripts with an unsparing hand. Sticklers for the severely heroic called on him to cut out his amorous passages, which were as the removal of the violin from the orchestra or the spring from the year. He begged Scipione Gonzaga to omit the love passages when he read the poem to his friends.

OLINDO AND SOFRONIA

LORENZO LIPPI (1606-1664). GALL. ANT. E. MOD., FLORENCE

He is in dread of the treachery of those who have fragments—they may be pirated (and, indeed, this happened); he is anxious to get the work out, and casts round for influential people whose good offices will secure the licensing of the book in the many States of Italy. He dreads lest the Inquisition should serve him the same trick that it played on the learned Sigonio, whose work it passed and then suppressed. He is in vast terror of one Antoniano Silvio, a great man in his time, who will travel through Ferrara on a Papal embassy to Germany. Silvio had been Professor of Eloquence at Ferrara and was now lecturing at Rome. He was the son of a baker, but raised himself to position by his zeal for learning and religion. He was a disciple of Filippo Neri, and enjoyed the friendship of Carlo Borromeo, a holy and self-sacrificing Archbishop, but a man of narrow mind, hating the theatre and trying to suppress it with all the sour vigour of a Calvinist. Silvio had already animadverted on Tasso's writings, but, when they met, he did not prove so very severe. Was this due to a perception of the poet's state of mind or to a memory of his own youth, when he, also, wooed the Muse, improvising and accompanying himself on the lyre? Tasso calls him "Il poetino".

A battle as fierce as the combats of the poem raged between Tasso and his critics, and it waxed hottest over the Olindo and Sofronia incident. The critics wanted it expunged, but Tasso stood firmly by that most charming episode. But it is a piteous spectacle, this badgering of genius, this harassing of a mind unstable and often unstrung. Tasso was perpetually altering the poem, rejecting this, reinstating that, adding, rejecting again.

He defends the incantation scenes and promises to eradicate them in the same breath. His own conscience became troubled at last. He consulted doctors of theology; he sought the professors of darker arts. Now he is wretched—anon just as elated. "I have consulted three astrologers concerning my nativity," he writes. "Not knowing me, one and all cast me as a great man of letters, and promised me long life and the happiest of fortunes. They touched so exactly on my merits and defects and habits of which I was not conscious, that I am beginning to be quite assured of my greatness, and that there will be proof of it before long. All three agree that I shall owe much to ladies." The poem is lovely as it stands. Must anything really be sacrificed? Can he not appease his own religious misgivings? can he not outflank his objectors and quiet his own hesitation by a pious dodge? He will follow the example of Dante; the poem shall bear an allegorical interpretation; "to secure luck to lovers and incantations, everything that will not stand the hammer shall go overboard".

The allegory was dear to the Renascence mind. In the Middle Ages almost the sole notion of productive thinking was that it was a process of analogising. Every natural image was supposed to conceal an occult, spiritual truth; nothing was so convincing as a good emblem or a subtle allegory. Dante propounds a doctrine of accommodation which might belong to Emmanuel Swedenborg or Hegelian Broad Church priests. The Christian Platonists of the fifteenth century revelled in the method. A little later than Tasso's time Ariosto was allegorised, and the Church gave grave commendation, doubtless to the

vast diversion of his ghost. So, to preserve the poetry, behold Tasso, a pagan by temperament and a Christian by fear, playing the hypocrite to the world and himself.

And if he had enemies in the literary world, envy and secret ill-will were not absent from the court. There were those around Alfonso who were quite willing to do the poet an ill turn. Perhaps this lay at the bottom of all Tasso's painful suspicion of his friends. Antonio Montecatini, Pigna's successor in the ducal secretaryship, or as we should now say, ducal prime minister, was an old, familiar friend. Tasso complains of Montecatini; he says that he inherited more than Pigna's animosity; "nevertheless, I hope to turn his malice to my advantage, and I will make fine sport of him, and yet contrive to keep him in good humour. He may laugh at my folly, but I shall turn the tables and smile at his prudence." Tasso was mistaken; Montecatini and Guarini had too high a position at the court to be envious of Tasso, who, be it remembered, as yet had hardly more fame than what attaches to a young man of promise, and he held no dignified post. But he was very mindful of his birth and claims to gentility, and not unconscious of great intellectual gifts; perhaps, too, he was a little tactless withal and exacting, haughty and inconsistent in his treatment of inferiors; it was they who were his real tormentors.

Twice during the year 1576 Count Tassoni of Modena received Tasso as his guest in that city, the second in the duchy. He met the best society at Tassoni's palace, and was an honoured visitor at the local academy, which prized the arts as well as letters and flirted with what was then supposed to be "philosophy". There was a small

crowd of literary dames at Modena, who are names only to us: Giulia Forni, Cavaliera Morano, Leonora Rossi Rangoni. Leader of this band of blue-stockings was Tasso's old adversary in the philosophical lists at Ferrara—Tarquinia Molza, learned like himself in Plato and the Spheres. Alfonso thought so highly of this lady that he jousted in her honour, wearing her favour. Among her contemporaries she was held up as a model of propriety, a judgment which the recently discovered journeyings of Giaches Wert between Ferrara and Mantua have somewhat discredited. This learned astronomer was surrounded by Platonic adorers, but she fell over head and ears in love with our poet. But either from virtuous resolution, or self-absorption (for he was still in a melancholy and unsettled state of mind), or, perhaps, from that disinclination for so much female erudition (which is apt to inspire more respect than ardour in the dull masculine mind), or that he had the man's prejudice against being wooed rather than wooer, Tasso remained frigid to the lady's advances; and this though she is reputed to have been as handsome as she was witty and instructed. He informed her in graceful, tactful lines that he may not listen to her plaint; "not that his heart is of cold, insensitive marble, but it is all consumed by another fire, and only dead cinders are left".

Tarquinia was a widow, and became maid of honour to Alfonso's third duchess, but banished herself at a look from the Duke in 1589, when her relations with Wert became court scandal.

Any reader of discerning mind can detect here and there in Tasso's letters a subtle but perceptible change

of character about this time (1576). They are specious, plausible, but full of discontent and suspicion. "I am, naturally, the most open man in the world. I do not know how to keep my own affairs to myself," he exclaims, and then he goes on to say that he has resolved, henceforward, to play a part; to adopt the dissimulation of a courtier and attend to insincerities that he had been wont to neglect. Sometimes he shows himself highly elated, sometimes he is irritable and suspicious. He even quarrels with Orazio Ariosto. Then he writes: "I am entirely clear. I am, in particular, quite undeceived about Ariosto and many other matters. I thank the Lord God who has unveiled the eyes of my mind; for it was truly very wretched—this false suspicion of men's friendship." Perhaps it was to quiet his mind that the Princess Leonora took him with her to beautiful Cosandoli, one of the ducal villas on the river. This was a very special favour. No one went in *villegiatura* with the Duke or any member of his family except by special invitation, and the privilege was eagerly desired and much valued. Here he spent a fortnight in the interval of his two visits to Mantua.

After the second visit to Tassini, Tasso complains in a letter to Gonzaga of the treachery of a man, at last identified as Antonio Virginio Brunello, "one whom I now know to have betrayed me a hundred times". "I must tell you one of the feats of Brunello. When I left home" (for the second visit to Mantua) "he asked me for the key of my rooms, pretending to want the use of them in some of his love affairs" (*mostrando di volersene servir in fatti d'amore*. The part of "Sir Pandarus of Troy," be it noted, was neither held undignified in a

man of Tasso's position and refinement, nor confidence concerning it at all likely to prove offensive to a Church dignitary); "and I lent it, locking up the chamber that contains my books and papers. In this room there was a box, where, besides my own compositions, I kept most of your letters and those of Signore Luca Scalabrino, and it contained private poems also. Conversing with him and others, afterwards, concerning my poem, which they had never seen, they made sundry objections which had been urged by Signore Barga, and this made me suspicious, particularly as I knew them to be men who were hardly likely to hit on such things of themselves. Fishing about to make certain, I heard at last, from a servant of my neighbour, Count Luigi Montecucioli, that, when I was at Modena this Lent, he saw Brunello enter my rooms by night with a blacksmith. I took so much pains that I found out the smith, who confessed to me that he had been brought to the court to open a room, of which the owner had lost the key. The rest you may infer. This is one of his frauds, and that it does not stand alone, but that there are others quite as pretty, and, as I think, of more importance, I believe, though I cannot be certain. I am glad that I destroyed all your letters and those of M. Luca in which there was anything too freely said concerning Sperone."

Brunello was a man of lowly origin who appears to have obtained some measure of intimacy with Tasso. Tasso's charge against him was probably due to an excited fancy; probably Brunello had really lost the key; for we find Tasso, on other occasions, charging different people with this same offence.

At this time there were two brothers at court, members of a Tuscan family that had come to settle in Ferrara in the fifteenth century, and there they had followed the profession of notary. One of the brothers, Maddalò Fucci, had been employed by the Duke, first as notary then as accountant, and now held no very dignified position in the service of Cardinal Luigi. Ercole Fucci occupied an even less exalted post in the ducal service itself.

It was a hot summer's day in July, 1576, a time that lies between the two visits to Modena. Tasso's letters at this period show increased excitement of mind, for he is haunted by the suspicion that he had grievously offended very dear friends. He was walking through the courtyard of the palace and made some remark. What he said we do not know, but Ercole Fucci answered him impertinently and gave him the lie. Tasso, feeling that his "honour was wounded," boxed the offender's ears. Ercole went off quietly enough; but shortly afterwards, when Torquato was crossing the great piazza in front of the castle, Ercole and his brother Maddalò came up with him, and the unhappy poet got a drubbing. Tasso made the best of the matter to his friends, and his imagination helped him. He writes that the Fucci were accompanied by a whole crowd; but they all fled before him and dared not touch him. The report of the Podestà, the magistrate of the city, tells a different tale. Proceedings were taken against the Fucci and then the matter dropped, for Ercole fled and Maddalò was in the service of the Cardinal; whence it would seem that the seignorial rights of the Middle Ages still persisted, and the

nobles, deprived of most of their power, still held to certain prerogatives against the law, which it was not wise to oppose. The Duke was in residence at the palace, and he not only gave orders for the prosecution of Ercole, but a month afterwards inquired as to what had been done in the matter, and, if nothing, wished it to be seen to without delay. But Ercole was in Florence, where he was sheltered by the Ferrarese ambassador, of all men. He had found a powerful protector there in the person of the Papal Nuncio, with whom it was not desirable to meddle. Ercole proved to be a very undesirable, turbulent visitor to the Florentines.

Tasso wrote to his learned friend, Orazio Capponi, that his conduct having manifested better breeding than that of his adversary, he might be content with dignified inactivity in the matter, even if the man were his equal. "But he is not my equal, neither in station nor in blood, so I shall do nothing further. I desire that the world shall know him as my inferior, and the matter is at an end, unless he goes about bragging."

Somehow a story of the heroism of Tasso in this affair circulated abroad and got incorporated in a doggrel couplet. It may have been some satiric soul who composed it, in the spirit of Byron when he wrote of

> the pen,
> That mighty instrument of little men.

Anyhow, throughout Ferrara, one might hear how

> Con la penna e con la spada
> Nessun val quanto Torquato.
>
> Show me, among the sons of men,
> The peer of Tasso's sword and pen.

We owe the discovery of the real facts of the case to the unwearied research of Signore Angelo Solerti, whose monumental labours cast even that of Teutons into the shade.

It is not the event but the mood that it suggests that works in a poet's mind. Tasso composed an "Address to a Faithless Friend" that may be thus rendered :—

Fate's sharpest arrow had not hurt so sore
Nor Envy's venomed fang. By both assailed
I deemed my guileless heart completely mailed.
I scorned the thought that aught could wound me more.
Then thou, whom in my heart of hearts I wore
And as a champion and deliv'rer sought,
Turned on thy friend the very arms he wrought.
Doth Heaven look on and suffer what I bore?
O sacred faith and love, are all thy laws
Thus mocked and set at naught? I throw away
My armour. Vaunt of men the vain applause.
Traitor, it is thy perjured love, I say,
The striker, not the wound, salt tears doth cause.
Thy fault, and not my pain, doth on me weigh.[1]

This sonnet has given rise to surmise as to the relations of Tasso and Ercole Fucci. Such speculation seems to the writer to be quite gratuitous. If the poet had borne himself with kindly condescension towards Ercole Fucci, if he had had a good word for him on occasion, and wished him well, it is quite in accordance with the poetic nature that such an incident should fire a whole train of imaginative passion. Events, even the smallest, in a poet's life are keys that may serve to unlock pent-up fountains of emotional experience that often seem to bear no special relevance or proportion to the occasion of their unsealing. When Tasso sang the beauties of

[1] Based on a translation by Bishop Milman, *Life of Tasso*, 1850.

Alfonso's court, his verses were not invariably mere affectation. The mere suggestion of love and beauty sufficed to release the Psyche locked up in his heart. Tasso's temperament was mobile, and mobility is the essence of the sensitive soul, correlative with its poetic quality. There is many a poet whose volition moves with the rapidity of a subtle shuttle, and the record of his days is, therefore, misconstrued and his character misprised. Because his sentiments, oftener than not, are transient, because his temper is variable as the speeding seasons, a hasty judgment usually pronounces him to have been, on occasion, shallow or insincere or even base.

But, to be a poet of the subjective order, necessarily implies redundant sensitiveness of soul; his sentiments commonly vary in ready response to his environment; each fresh incident of life is apt to affect him unduly and at once, and he easily deviates, with fresh bias, into newer paths of feeling; his quick sympathy sways with the swift changes of the hour; his superfluous sensibility bends to every wind that plays, and is readily incited to passion, or moulded into mood. His spirit is like the inconstant ocean, tremblingly alive to every breeze; its great movements are due less to the force of the wind than to its own fulness. Now, his sea of passion charges in thunder, shattering cliffs into chasms and cleaving new paths for the argosies of men; now it breaks its force against iron-bound and impenetrable confines, or casts fantastic arms to irresponsive skies; now, in swift mutation, reflecting the peace of heaven and the serenity of a cloudless infinite, and now again, the flood of feeling bears, with quiet rhythm, sad salutations to melancholy shores—musical

whisperings of mortality and the futile fading of things. Mood succeeds mood, perplexing contradictions pass over the poet's soul, and leave its depths unchanged and impregnable. Unfoldings of delight are succeeded by agonies of despair; but often it is as if the iron had penetrated an unsubstantial spirit, and the wound had closed on the arrow as it pierced. The tardier response, the slow, painful healing of plainer men, renders them incapable of comprehending such swift transitions, or how both intensity and mutability are of the plastic essence of the imaginative mind. The sensitive poetic soul may be justly charged with weakness, unbalance, oversensitiveness; the loud wail of its self-elected sufferings often moves us to sad contempt; the absurd ardour of its misplaced sentiments often excites us to laughter; oftenest, however unwillingly, we are constrained by some subtle, unexpected and peremptory power.

"Tasso is wholly mad, but in matters of literature and poetry his brain is stable enough," wrote Belissario Vinta, a little later on. In the grayest and gloomiest of his days he still continued to receive visitations from a serener world; he still heard voices, sometimes gay, oftener sad, but always tender and soothing; voices that bore some tone of the authentic presence and came, indifferent to their occasion, through the gate of horn.

We prate about the pressure of modern days. Were the courts of the sixteenth century less bustling? No sooner had Tasso returned from Mantua than the Duke carried him off to Comacchio. Here a fresh king and

queen of the revels were elected every day, and Tasso must write prologues and attend the performance of farces and mock-believe jousts. All the beauties of the court and other fair women from other states were there. All must have their meed of praise. Tasso wrote two sonnets to the Countess of Scandiano, who, during his absence, had borne her husband a son, and these verses have a true ring—they sprang from his heart.

CHAPTER X

THE MADNESS OF TASSO

Outbreak of Insanity—Medical Treatment in the Sixteenth Century—The Escape of Tasso—His Wanderings—Adventure in the Abruzzi—He Discloses Himself to his Sister, Cornelia—Return to the Court of Ferrara—The Prince of Mantua—Tasso and Sforza Pallavicino—Journeyings—An Incident by the Way—The House of Savoy—St. Carlo Borromeo and his Cousin Ferdinand

AT Comacchio it seemed as if the clouds that were gathering over Tasso's mind might disperse. There were days of sunshine, when the dazzling, restless eddy of amusement (and probably the smiles of the dark lady, too) drove away his gloom. But the perpetual stimulation of the festivities of the carnival could have been no really good thing for an exhausted nervous system. In the quieter hours of Lent, the ancient, ill-favoured dubitations came back and dreads haunt him again. His mind became dull and bare; he was visited by short, sharp gusts of passion; there were no vital strivings; only the ironical echoes of sere and mutilated joys, hollow rustlings as of the wintry ground-swirl that stirs the perished leaves.

He wrote to the Marchese del Monte, a gentleman at the court of Urbino, imploring him to despatch some faithful servant to him, some one quite unconnected with Ferrara; but the Marchese was to threaten him, none the

less, of what would happen if he failed in fidelity. He wrote to the Duke of Urbino himself, on the same subject. He began to think that, somehow, he had mortally offended Duke Alfonso and other friends; he dreads lest he should be poisoned or otherwise made away with; he conceives that he has offended an implacable Heaven; he is sure that there are many heretics among the court; in fact he knows who they are; he even whispers their names to his confessor.

It must be observed that, as is usually the case in incipient unsoundness of mind, there was at first the gentlest departure from probability. There is usually reason in the unreason; often the real state of the case remains undetected by relatives and close friends; the sufferer is plausible, and, if he be a clever man, will make out a good case. The court was no Garden of Eden before the fall: it was a gay masquerade, that dissembled envy, malice and all uncharitableness. A mortal offence was easy enough to give and could be silently punished at Ferrara; there were secret removals, as we have seen. Very likely there was hidden heresy in Ferrara, for it had been an heretical centre and the dogmas of the Church had only recently been defined. The Church was irregularly and inconsistently severe in detecting heresy in books and in punishing or condoning what offences they might contain; and though willing to stretch forth a saving hand to all souls that were tortured by misgivings and required strengthening in the faith, she was unwearied in her search for the puniest appearance of schism. Such are the real facts on which Tasso's perverted reasonings worked.

Duke Alfonso was going on a progress through his

dominions. He could not have behaved more kindly to his new historiographer or showed more solicitude for his welfare, for he left him under the care of his own sisters; he demanded to be constantly kept informed of Tasso's state of health, and he charged his physicians to look after him. Unfortunately, physicians often possessed more self-complacency than knowledge. Clinical instruction was indeed being introduced into hospitals, but the stimulus that followed the discovery of new drugs in the New World and the new advance in anatomy and physiology were hardly yet felt by practitioners. The rule of the faculty, like that of Molière's neophyte, was still

> Clysterium donare
> Postea seignare
> Ensuita purgare
> Reseignare, repurgare et reclysterisare.

Tasso was bled and purged, and, as might be expected, he failed to improve.

Physicians are no less tenacious of doctrine than priests, and the practitioner of Tasso's time held many speculations to be facts that subsequent generations have discovered to be fictions. They were very convinced and very authoritative; they had a ready faith in their medicaments; there was a multitude of quacks, too, perhaps more bearing diplomas than without them; all were perfectly self-confident in their rash dealings with the human frame. A druggist kept shop in the broad and noble Via degli Angeli, and Tasso placed particular reliance on this man. He did not know what to make of himself. The herb-man was confident that he could cure him in a few days. But the Duchess Lucrezia commanded the chemist to take his orders from the physician.

That learned gentleman, having administered the bane of blood-letting, now prescribed the antidote of white wine, and this the Duchess sent. But, somehow, Tasso did not seem to get on. He was more troubled concerning religion than ever; he wished to consult the Inquisition at headquarters, and talked about setting off for Rome the next day. The Ferrarese Inquisitor advised Alfonso to keep him at Ferrara since "he was so industriously vexing himself with vain imaginings". Tasso was ready to accuse, not merely himself, but others, of heresy. Now Ferrara had been a hot-bed of heresy, and its court still remained under the close surveillance of Rome. Renée of France, Alfonso's mother, had sheltered Protestants and been visited by Calvin himself; Lucrezia and Leonora had been brought up in the Reformed Faith; and their father, Ercole II., had been obliged to banish Renée, great lady as she was, from court. Renée had been arraigned for heresy, and, though she recanted, her heart remained with the Huguenots, and she left husband and children and returned to France to aid them. The Holy See, in constant want of money and desirous of exalting its secular dignity among the thrones of Europe, would be only too delighted to find an excuse for taking possession of the fief of Ferrara. It was all very well to let Tasso consult the local Inquisitor; it was a very different matter to let him go to Rome. He was kept under close surveillance.

One evening, when he was pouring out his delusions to the patient ear of Lucrezia, he suddenly seized a weapon and attacked a servitor, who was, perhaps, his male attendant. The reports of ambassadors often prove our most accurate source of information as to the courts of

Italy. The despatches of Florentine and Venetian envoys are peculiarly valuable: their authors knew the world far better than most princes and were far more astute; their reports are penetrating, circumstantial, and often correct. Neither Florence nor Venice had yet suffered much from diminished ability in their envoys. Maffeo Veniero was stationed by the Grand Duke of Tuscany at the Ferrarese court, and the very next day after Tasso's outburst he wrote to his master concerning this "truly lamentable occurrence for one of such worth and genius. I must tell you that Tasso was imprisoned yesterday evening for drawing a knife in the apartments of the Duchess of Urbino upon one of her servants; but the object of this confinement is cure of his malady rather than punishment. He is troubled with the delusion that he is guilty of heresy, and he fears he will be poisoned, which arises, I take it, from melancholy blood confined about the heart and fuming up to the brain."

Tasso, his head somewhat cooled by this outburst of passion in the presence of a princess, was led off to certain rooms in the palace that served as prison cells. He wrote to the Duke, who was at Belriguardo, enclosing the letter in another, which he got Guido Coccapani, the ducal steward, to send. "Signor Tasso," writes Coccapani, "having sent for me, when I came, drew me apart, so as not to be overheard, and, having told me the subject of the enclosed, begged me to open it, present it to Your Highness and implore a reply. I tried to dissuade him from sending it, saying that Your Highness had no object but his health, and that he might rely on my word. But he insisted on my sending it, and assures you that, if he

is kept in prison, he will be driven to despair, for he cannot bear to be confined. He is ready to take physic and do whatever Your Highness commands, but he entreats that he may be allowed to go back to his own room. Your Highness will determine as to what is best for him." Alfonso behaved, and Tasso confesses it, "almost as if he had been a brother, and not as a sovereign". As soon as it was deemed safe the prisoner was released and taken to his rooms, but the windows were grilled and two attendants were appointed to take care of him. He wrote a grateful letter to the Duke, thanking him and promising to be quiet.

It is a melancholy spectacle, such as Ophelia wept to see, this of the courtier, the scholar, "the observed of all observers, quite, quite down"! But the return to his own rooms seems to have effected some slight, temporary improvement. The Princess Leonora visited him, and soon the Duke ordered that he should be conveyed to Belriguardo, hoping that change of scene would be of service. But no real amelioration followed. He himself requested to be taken to the brothers of the Monastery of San Francesco, and as they proved willing to receive him, the Duke sent him thither. His old sweetheart, Lucrezia Bendidio, proved herself to be true woman. She put aside the light pleasures of the court to accompany Tasso to the city, and sat by his side during that melancholy drive. At San Francesco he was wont to "empty himself in confession and break out into a mountain of frenzies. So that he is far worse than ever." The Duke desired the superior of the convent to "choose for his keepers persons fit to admonish him in his madness".

Tasso wrote to Scipione Gonzaga to help him in presenting an appeal to the Holy Office: "Your lordship will be able to comprehend from the enclosed supplication what condition I am in. Either I am not only of melancholy fancy but almost mad, or else I am fiercely persecuted. This way alone can lead to peace, or quiet my anxieties." The letter and the appeal were, of course, suppressed by the Ferrarese Government. He wrote to the Duke: "I confess that I deserve punishment for my faults, and I thank Your Highness for forgiving them. I agree that I require purging for my melancholy fancies, and I thank Your Highness for assigning it to me. But of this I am confident, that in much I am not fanciful; whereas Your Highness, if I may be pardoned for saying it, is as much so as any prince of the whole world. You believe not that I have had persecutors in your service: I have had the most cruel and mortal enemies. You believe that you have delivered me from the Inquisition: I am only the more entangled. . . . By the bowels of Christ, I entreat you to believe that I am less mad than you are deceived. Henceforth, if I speak to any, I will confess all I clearly know to purge myself of my humours." What wonder that the Duke refused to receive further correspondence or allow Tasso to write to the Princesses! He was busy with his pen writing letters to the dreaded Supreme Tribunal of the Inquisition, and, lest he should betake himself thither, he was transferred to the Castello again. Indeed, he had become too great a responsibility for the good fathers of the monastery. He suspected even them, writing to Alfonso a long rambling piteous letter to the effect that he was not legitimately absolved

by the Inquisitors, and that the monks had been up to tricks with his wine, "which I assure Your Highness is true, and I put it to the conscience of the friars and M. Giuseppe, their physician, and the four cavaliers who were chosen to see to it". The ducal steward came to the conclusion that he must be regarded as violently mad, and wrote to his master to that effect. Everybody seems to have been genuinely grieved to see the poor brain teeming with such strange imaginations. The Duke was quite aware that Tasso had been casting about to transfer his services to the Medicean house, but he wrote to Cardinal Albano, the former Collateral of the Venetian Republic, who had known Tasso at Bergamo, entreating him to do a deed of mercy and loving-kindliness: would he write to the sufferer with his own hand, reassuring him?

Tasso had given a sore time to the good fathers: he proved too cunning for his guards at Ferrara. One morning they found his room empty. Horsemen were sent out in all directions: they went on a vain errand. The corn was high, and Tasso now added the craft of the madman to his natural ingenuity. Soon a letter arrived from Count Cesare Lambertini, who was administering Poggio, a property of the Princess Leonora. "This morning," wrote the Count (28th July, 1577), "at daybreak Signor Tasso arrived here in a peasant's dress" (he must have changed clothes with some hind on the way). "He was in a wretched condition and very agitated. He told me that he had fled from Ferrara and that Your Most Illustrious Excellency commands me to enable him to reach Bologna in safety. I, who perceived

his calamity, did my utmost to retain him, but my efforts were unavailing, and he slipped away to Bologna this very minute." And following this missive came another from the local Inquisitor, saying that he dreaded lest Tasso should go to Rome. If he went he would go with the old story that the Inquisition at Bologna had given him too ready an absolution; he would accuse himself and others in serious form; indeed, the authorities at Rome, not being aware of his mental state, would probably be persuaded by his plausibility, and serious mischief might ensue. Moreover, His Highness had foes at Rome.

The messengers returned from Bologna. They had gone on a fruitless errand. Tasso wandered more or less aimlessly in an opposite direction, over the flat lands of Romagna and the Marches, gathering some measure of sanity as he jogged along, for he was ministered to by wise, silent Nature. He might catch the distant glitter of the Adriatic at times, and always on his right were range after range of the Apennines, each hill exactly like its neighbours and uplifting a bare burnt brow. He would avoid the coast towns and seek shelter in mean hamlets that crouch in the valleys, or little brown townlets that bear ancient names and look over the plain with quiet immemorial pride and all the dignity of position. Passing beyond the Gran Sasso, their topmost rocks shining, even at this hot season of the year, with morning snows, he reached at last the high valley of Aquila and its ancient capital, Sulmona, where Ovid was born. Here he rested, and then again pursued his lonely, melancholy way. He followed tracks that only goat-herds traversed, and that led through the wild solitudes of the Abruzzi.

"One evening in the spring-time," so wrote Count Giambatista Manso, fifteen years after Tasso's death, "suffering, in peril, but not bearing the burden and indignities that years do bring, full of vain hope, on foot and all alone, he wandered, I know not by what path, to the mountains of Velletri, and there, resting awhile, night drew on, and he betook him to the shelter of a shepherd's hut, where, indeed, he found kindly welcome, but poor viands and no too agreeable lodging. Here, what with discomfort and illness, and being unable to sleep much, his sombre misgivings increased." (He was now bent on visiting his sister at Sorrento, but was still under condemnation for treason and outlawed from the kingdom, where greedy relatives enjoyed his heritage.) "But he bethought him that he might fare on in greater safety and be less marked of men if he wore a 'herdsman's' habit. So, in the grey of morning, he begged his hosts to exchange a suit of their clothes for his own, which were of much more value; and these he left with them, thinking maybe of Apollo, when, in similar guise, he drove the flocks of Admetus. Thus he found himself in unwonted, unfamiliar attire, and betook him again to his footpath way. But he was unused to much walking, nor could he foot the long journey as a hale and strapping man. With difficulty was he able to reach Gaeta, where he arrived weary and done up after four days of travel. But here, by good luck, was a barque of Sorrento, just setting sail. This he boarded, and with other voyagers, after an easy night-passage, was landed there at break of day."

Manso has always an eye to romance, and there is one discoverable inaccuracy in this account. Tasso made the

journey in the summer heats, not in the spring-time. And one wonders how the poet, who had changed clothes with a peasant before reaching Poggio, had acquired a habit of any value afterwards. But however incorrectly he may have reported it, even to the mixing up of a prior exchange of garments with real kindness done him by goat-herds in the Abruzzi, Manso probably drew the narrative from Tasso's own lips. "Artists of the Bolognese school have placed Erminia on their canvases," writes J. A. Symonds. "But, up to the present time, I know of no great painter who has chosen the more striking incident of Tasso exchanging his court dress for sheepskins and a fustian jacket in the smoky cottage at Velletri."

Cornelia was sitting alone; she was now a widow, and her two boys were at their school. Suddenly a man in rough attire came to the door and commanded a domestic to say that he wished to see her. He was admitted, and said that he bore a letter from her brother: Torquato was in sad straits, and his life would be imperilled unless his sister could render him aid. The news was unexpected, the entreaty pathetic, and Cornelia, who seems to have resembled Torquato in strong family affection, was overwhelmed with grief. But she was also perplexed, and demanded details. Tasso, who had deadly fear of the royal officers, now found himself in a situation that taxed his ingenuity. He drew on his imagination, and conjured up such a fable as Cornelia might credit, trying to give it verisimilitude by adopting a sympathetic countenance and uttering words of compassion; in fact he acted so well that "his sister was affected with such sovereign anguish that it took hold

of her heart; she swooned and was like to the dead. Whereupon, being assured of his sister's great love, and, also, because he saw her endure such grief on his account, he began to console her, and, little by little, discovered to her who he was, for he feared that she might give up the ghost in too great an access of joy if he revealed himself too soon."

Cornelia was left badly off, with three girls and two boys on her hands. But her sisterly care for Tasso was unbounded. The quiet home, the renewal of family intercourse, the general tranquillity of life at Sorrento, were favourable to the recovery of mental balance. Tasso was placed under medical care, but he revolted at certain medicines that were ordered, a rebellion in which he may, perhaps, have sympathisers. His very real sense of religious duty, his craving for what neither bread nor riches nor fame will satisfy, led him to make frequent visits to the Benedictine monastery, where he spent much time in prayer and confession.

But new anxieties visited him, even while old illusions began to fade. He got worried about the fate of his poem and other manuscript pieces that he had left at Ferrara. He wrote to many friends to help him with the Duke. Cardinal Albano, at least, interested himself on Tasso's behalf, for, as he says, he was "moved with compassion for that poor disordered mind". A correspondence passed between him and Alfonso. The Duke was willing to send Tasso's effects to the Ferrarese ambassador at Rome, but said nothing about the manuscripts. He may have feared that Tasso, still in a perilously unstable state of mind, would destroy them or take

them to some other prince, and he dearly desired the glory that would attach to Ferrara when Tasso should deem the correction of the *Gerusalemme* to be perfected and the poem fit for publication.

Now, and for the rest of his life, Tasso remained in a condition when white was often black to him, and he would argue against a patent fact, giving it such a turn, and pleading with so much plausibility, that he won the ear and compassion of all who knew the truth, and the credence of those who did not. Later on he sent to his old friend and playfellow, Duke Francesco Maria of Urbino, a strange and ingenious perversion of his relations with Alfonso. He says: "After my flight from Ferrara, which was justified and necessary, I wandered from place to place, and everywhere, save in your dominions, found perils, cozenage, and ferocity. At last I reached Sorrento where I remained some months in the safe shelter of my sister's home, and thence I attempted, by writing to the most serene Lord Duke and his sisters, to win back His Highness' favour. For, with that, I naturally expected, not only to recover the comfort and advantage of my humble fortunes, but, even if I could not improve them, as I hoped, at least to add to my reputation and fame. But, whatever may have been the reason, I received no answer from my Lord, the Duke, or my Lady, the Duchess your wife, and, from Madam Leonora, such a one as let me understand that she could do me no service. The replies of others gave me no hope, and this so increased my desperation that I thought it both expedient and magnanimous to return and place my life freely in his hands." Now all that passed between Tasso's friends and

the Duke was told to Cornelia, and Tasso admits that he knew what the replies were! We shall learn presently the real facts of his return to Ferrara.

Court life was a necessity to Tasso: he was by birth and training a courtier, and, later on, he managed to put his nephews into court service. He pined, perhaps, for its pomp and glitter and frivolous entertainments; certainly for the assured position it gave, the adulation that awaited a successful man of letters thereat, the luxury, the priceless library, the flattering attention of princes. The poet at court not merely reflected the glory of his prince, but ofttimes bestowed it in even greater measure. Tasso became restless at Sorrento. He went on to Naples, and, while there, received an advantageous offer, through his tried and true friend, Scipione Gonzaga, from the Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, the brother of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. But Tasso never quite knew his own mind now; he declined the very thing he had sought, and then tortured himself as to whether he had given offence by refusing. He was just as bent on getting back to Ferrara as he had been on escaping from it, perhaps because his treasured manuscripts were in the custody of Alfonso. He made for Rome, where he sought shelter in the palace of the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, and then, without even seeing the Cardinal, he went to the mansion of the Ferrarese ambassador. This gentleman, one Masetti, afterwards Bishop of Reggio, was one of the many loyal friends that stood by Tasso. He wrote to the Duke, entreating him to have the poor wight physicked, to "remove the humours from his brain". Tasso wrote penitent letters to the Duke and the Princess Leonora.

Masetti begged that he might be received at Ferrara, as his house was noisy and not likely to aid Tasso's recovery; and he wrote yet again, saying that Tasso "is worrying himself because of the Duke's silence, and that a relapse is threatened". After much correspondence, the Duke, who was paying for Tasso's medical treatment, informed Masetti and the Chevalier Gualengo, who was Envoy-Extraordinary at the Papal Court, that he was inclined to receive Tasso again.

Torquato's own letters to the Duke were most abject. He said he would willingly be worse than he was if by that he could owe his life to His Highness' kindness and acknowledge it; he had, as he believed, been poisoned in Naples; he had been designedly careless in eating and drinking, so that he might be fetched back and saved by the Duke; he was surrounded by intrigue; he would assuredly be murdered on the road—only to look at His Highness would restore him to health. The Duke's patience must indeed have been tried, and he adopted a tone of judicious severity. His last despatch to his envoy runs thus: "With regard to Tasso, concerning whom you wrote, it is our will that you should tell him frankly that we are willing to receive him if he is minded to return. But first he should be made sensible that he is full of melancholy whims, and that those suspicions of malice and persecution are pure delusion. This he ought to be aware of from one out of many evidences. For he has a strange notion that we wish to put him to death, though we have always been gracious to him and made much of him; and he ought to know that *if such had been our design nothing would have been easier than to effect it.*"

(A striking sidelight, this, on the degree of mediæval power still exercised by feudatories and petty sovereigns, and of the methods by which they obtained their will!) "If he come, therefore, he must resolve to be quiet and obedient, and submit to treatment at the hands of the physicians. If he think to make a ferment and use such expressions as aforetime, and will not submit to be cured, we will not expostulate with him but expel him from our territories, and this for good and all. Enough, if he intend to come; otherwise, he shall have certain of his things which are at Coccapani's, and to him he must write."

Everything was strangely perverted by Tasso in his subsequent letters to friends—vindicatory letters that are full of the subtle, specious sophistry of the insane. He arrived at Ferrara in good bodily health, though fatigued by the journey. He struck Canigiani as being "all right, save in the brain-pan". He was not allowed to lodge at the palace, but private apartments were found for him; he was allowed a servant to wait on him, and his meals were supplied from the ducal table. He was given plenty of calmatives, purges, and sleeping draughts by the physicians. The prescriptions have been disinterred from their resting-places in the dusty archives of the Estensi; there is no record of continued payment of Tasso's salary.

Gibbon speaks of the sad malady which affected Tasso's mind without clouding his genius. It is true that, of verse, a good tragedy, some very noble short pieces and a magnificent fragment were composed by him after his infirmity set in. He also wrote a vast number of rhetorical letters and dialogues which are

quasi-philosophical disputations. The retention of so much literary power, the flashing of vivid imaginations combined with serious mental disorder astounded his contemporaries and has perplexed succeeding generations. Such phenomena are rare, but they are by no means unknown. But one thing is wholly unknown. Talent may be retained in varying measure by the mentally afflicted, but at best it becomes spasmodic in its manifestations. Failure of power is certain, though it may be slow. Tasso's malady never entirely left him; but his mental darkness was broken into at intervals by gleams of light; light that was not that of the visible world, but that flashed up from the unknown substrata of that personality, which is, after all, but as the thin white line of foam may be to the vast ocean that casts it—an overflowing and outbursting of that infinite mystery that our intelligence can never penetrate and live. The poet had hours of release when his imagination took wings as of yore, and traversed an unembodied world. But his fancy lost its rich tones bit by bit; it became sadder in hue, more tinged with melancholy tenderness; the forms of his creation became less vivid, until, at last, his genius sinks to the banality of "Le Sette Giorni," which is the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, amplified with pleonastic prodigality, and happily buried in the unattractiveness of Italian blank verse. There can be no injury, however slight, done to the great nervous centres, that does not disturb their delicate equipoise, and, if stability is ever recovered (and in Tasso's case it was not recovered), evidences of injury remain.

In February, 1578, Don Francesco D'Este, the uncle

of the Duke, died, and the spectacle of Bradamante, his daughter, visiting the tomb, stimulated at once the heart and the pen of the man who had himself been so loving a son. In a more joyous mood, he wrote bright madrigals for the other daughter, the gay Marfisa, and he sang the nuptials of her cousin, Don Alfonso, in verse as fresh and sprightly as those of his happier youth. The Duke, like a sensible man, was opposed to such mental activity; he thought Tasso required quiet, but this only made the poet suspect Montecatini of jealous intrigue. Tasso desired to leave Ferrara, and the Duke let him go (June, 1578).

First he reached Mantua. The Duke, who had been a kind friend to Bernardo, took no notice of the son, perhaps because Vincenzo Gonzaga, the heir-apparent, who was an irreclaimable scapegrace, gave him welcome. Vincenzo was a precocious lad of sixteen, full of all the joy and pride of life that had characterised the Renascence, its love of art and letters, its dissoluteness, its self-indulgence, its want of self-control. He was licentious, even for a prince, but good-natured and capable of kindly deeds when they did not require much exertion or interfere with his pleasures. We shall meet him again. So young a prince was not likely to prove a munificent patron, and Tasso was compelled to sell a ruby ring, valued at sixty scudi, for twenty, and a gold collar, both presents from the Duchess of Urbino. From Mantua he proceeded to Padua, where it is said that he received hospitality from the monks of St. Benedetto Novello. The Martin Codex contains an incident that is said to have occurred during his stay, and very likely it really

happened. "Alcasto Trissino, Girolamo Velo, Sartorio Losco, and Paolo Gualdo, were very desirous of completing their studies at Padua, but they could not enter the city without first enduring quarantine in some place free from plague; they went to the Villa di Masone in Marosticano, bearing with them their various books, in order not to lose time. Having been set free by the Podestà, all four proceeded to Padua, and set up house together, and dwelling in all amity and concord, awaited their doctorate. The house was quite near the Church of S. Spirito, and they lived on there, full of joke and pleasantry, for Alcasto was a specially funny person, and so was Paolo, but never was there the least offence taken. Besides letters and the humanities, they affected music. Their house was frequented by the chief scholars and people of rank and literati of the city. Men of Vincenza often visited them going to and fro, for their house lay convenient for those who were for Venice, and rarely did a week pass that they had not a guest. They were friendly with the most important folk in that city, who came in great numbers to study, drawn as much, maybe, by reverence for Benedetto Giorgi, who, by the way, was a neighbour of these gentlemen and always with them, as to play 'mall' in the street of San Spirito. . . . It happened at this time that the famous poet, Torquato Tasso, having gone mad at Ferrara, escaped to this city, and was recognised by Sartorio Lasco, who, seeing him a homeless wanderer, told him he would confer a great honour if he would abide with him; and Tasso accepted, much to the delight of them all. He remained over fifteen days with these students, and it was high jubilee there, for there

was always a crowd of people clamouring to see and hear him. Sforza Pallavicino, 'Generale' of these signors, was then in Padua. He desired greatly to see Tasso, and prayed the gentlemen of Vicenza to bring him, since he himself was confined to the house through gout. Tasso was willing, and went thither in the company of his four hosts. Sforza was carried in on an arm-chair; he had a stool placed by his side and begged Tasso to sit down. He went on insisting politely, but Tasso, just as politely, but firmly, declined to do so: he was very well standing, and did not wish to sit down. Finally when the magnate still went on, renewing his entreaties, Tasso made a beautiful bow and took himself off down the staircase. Paolo ran after him and begged him to return, and not to affront so great a person in this way. But he was firm in refusal, and, when asked by Giraldo why he had acted so, replied, 'One has to give such people an occasional lesson in manners. Why did he not have seats brought for you gentlemen? Why did he select me? What are you? Are you not every way bigger folk than I?' And, however much Giraldo might try to smooth him down, it was of no use; he would not return. And the others all left too, so that Signor Sforza remained all by himself, mightily perplexed, and crediting Tasso with an unaccountable fit of madness, when it was nothing but what his own bad manners had caused."[1]

[1] The game of "mall" that the relater of this anecdote speaks of was a favourite amusement. It was played in the open spaces of cities with ball (*palla*), mallet (*maglio*) and hoops, and was perhaps the origin of croquet. It became fashionable in England, and gave the name of Pall Mall to a London Street. The slight reference to the plague reminds us of the series of terrible visitations that more than decimated nine genera-

FRANCESCO I (DE' MEDICI), GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY

ANGELO BRONZINO. UFFIZI

Tasso went on to Venice and used all his influence while there to get the Grand Duke of Florence to take him into his service. He wrote a canzona in honour of the birth of Antonio, the son of the Duke by his mistress, the famous Venetian lady, Bianca Capello. He wrote to Matteo Veniero, promising that, given three years, he would surpass the *Gerusalemme*. Veniero thought it very probable, seeing that lunacy and poetry are sisters; and used all his influence with his master, Francesco of Tuscany. The Grand Duke wrote to Veniero saying that Tasso's malady was not likely to leave him, and that he was not prepared to take a madman into his house. So poor Torquato, half heart-broken and little better than a

tions of men. The middle of the fourteenth century saw the first appearance of this dreadful scourge; it came sweeping from the East and sent three-fifths of the population of Europe to the grave. Agnolo da Tura of Siena tells us that, in 1347, he buried five of his sons with his own hands in the same grave. It acted as a solvent to morals, altered the economic conditions of Italy, and gave opportunity to the first abortive attempts of the proletariat at the political guidance of the Italian republics in the fourteenth century. It was endemic throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and in the first decade of the sixteenth century, after nearly depopulating China, it wrought great havoc in Italy, Germany and Spain. Two years before Tasso's visit to Padua 70,000 people had perished in Venice, and some years after his death, 300,000 people are said to have been carried off at Naples in less than five months. The Italian cities boasted the most magnificent palaces in Europe, they had many wide and well-paved streets (while elsewhere one walked in mire), decent houses had the luxury of glass window-panes, the churches and public buildings were crowded with the highest products of human imagination, the finest creations of plastic and pictorial art; but there was no notion, as yet, of clean and sweet living, the cities were inconceivably polluted and wretchedly overcrowded, and every now and again, in the words of an English versifier of the next century, the alleys

> "Did vomit out their undigested dead,
> Who by cartloads are carried to the grave,
> For all those lanes with folk were overfed."

starveling now, wrote to the Duke of Urbino vindicating himself and casting all the blame on Duke Alfonso. This famous letter, a model of courtly style, ends with a violent diatribe against Montecatini. It contains a veiled attack on the conduct of the whole House of Este, written with all the power of genius, and its distortions of fact exhibit no small amount of ingenuity. Scipione Gonzaga learned a different tale from the self-same hand; Tasso wrote him that Alfonso "exalted me from obscurity to reputation; he relieved me of poverty and gave renown to my works by lending them his ear; he honoured me with every mark of attention, every favour; he counted me worthy of sitting at his table; he gave me his intimacy, nor did he refuse any request I made". He followed up the letter to Francesco Maria by appearing before him at Pesaro. He was kindly received by his old playmate, who lodged him at the house of his secretary. He submitted to medical treatment there, but refused the cautery, which was then the treatment in fashion for the mentally afflicted. He seems to have cheered up in the society of old friends of his youth, and indulged, both at Pesaro and Urbino, in philosophical disputations, voluminous letter-writing, and the composition of verse.

Before long the restless fit comes on Tasso again. He will seek service with Emanuele Filiberto, the Duke of Savoy. He writes to this "first, most valorous, and most glorious of Italian princes," and, without awaiting a reply, journeys on to Mantua and begs Don Cesare D'Este to use his influence to get the young Prince Vincenzo of Mantua to take him into his service. Don Cesare did not vouch a reply; but even before he might hope to

receive one, the unhappy wight is off for Turin (September, 1578).

It is to this journey that we owe the incident so delightfully recounted in the "Padre di Famiglia," a work written two years later in the seclusion of a madhouse. "It was in the season," says Tasso, "when the vine-dresser is wont to press the wine from the ripe grapes, and the trees are stripped of their fruit, that I rode in the garb of a humble traveller from Novara to Vercelli. The skies began to darken and heavy rain-clouds were gathering in, so I pricked my horse on. And suddenly I heard the barking of dogs interspersed with shouts. Looking behind me, I saw a roebuck pursued by two swift hounds; it ran slackly from fatigue and the hounds seized on it, so that it died almost at my feet. And a little after, a youth came up, of eighteen or twenty years, tall, pleasing, well-shaped, vigorous, and clean of limb, who, calling the dogs off and whipping them, took the dead creature from their mouths and gave it to a peasant. He cast it over his shoulders, and, at a sign from the youth, made off at a good pace. Then, turning to me, the young man said, 'Tell me, I pray you, whither you are journeying'. 'I wish to gain Vercelli to-night,' I replied, 'if it is not too late.' 'You might perchance manage to do so,' said he, 'but the river that flows by the city and divides the lands of Piedmont and Milan is swollen, and it will not be easy to ford. But if it would please you to rest with me, who dwell in a little house by the river, you will find it less uncomfortable than any other place in the neighbourhood.'

"Whilst he was speaking I observed him closely, and methought there was something indescribably sweet and

gracious in his face. So, judging him of no low degree, all on foot though he was, I gave my horse into the care of the *vetturino* who had come with me, and dismounted, saying that I would decide whether to stay or pass on when I should come up to the river. So I followed him. But he said 'I will go before, not as a mark of rank, indeed, but to serve you as your guide'.

"And I answered: 'My good fortune has indeed given me a guide superior to my deserts. May God ever so favour me.'

"He was silent; and I followed him without speaking. But he kept glancing round and searching me with his eyes from head to foot, as if to make out what manner of man I might be. Wherefore I judged it well to forestall his curiosity and satisfy him in some measure. 'I was never before in this country,' said I. For, aforetime, when I passed over to France by way of Piedmont, I did not take this road. But it is a pleasant land, and I do not regret to have come hither; the country-side is beautiful and its inhabitants are indeed courteous.

"Now he, seeing that I gave him the opportunity, could no longer restrain his desire, but said: 'Tell me, I pray you, who you are, and of what country, and what fortune leads you into these parts?'

"'I was born,' I answered, 'in the kingdom of Naples, that famous city, of a Neapolitan mother. But, on my father's side, I derive my origin from Bergamo, a Lombard city. I will not reveal my name; it is so obscure that, though I might indeed give it, you would not be enlightened. I flee from the displeasure of a prince and of fortune, and I repair to the State of Savoy.'

"And he: 'you go where there is a magnanimous and just prince'.

"But, perceiving that I preserved a certain reserve, he was diffident of asking more. And scarcely had we journeyed some five hundred paces than we arrived at the river-bank, and the stream was running swifter than a Parthian dart, and so swollen that one was soon shoulder-deep in the water. And, from what I learned here from the peasants, the traveller might not win the other side, for the ferryman had refused to carry some French cavaliers over, though they had offered unusual payment. Therefore turning to my youthful guide, I said:—

"'I am constrained by necessity to accept that invitation which, indeed, I would not willingly have refused.'

"And he: 'Certes, I would rather have received this favour from your free will than from fortune. But I am rejoiced to find that there is no doubt of your remaining.'

"So I was more than ever convinced, by his speech, that he was of no ignoble blood, nor of mean intelligence, and I was well content to have such an host. 'If it may please you,' I replied, 'since I am to receive your hospitality, I shall not be sorry how soon.'

"As I spoke, he pointed out the house, which was at no great distance from the bank of the river. It was new and lofty, and one could see at a glance that it contained several suites of rooms, one above the other. Before it was a little open space set round with trees, and the portal was reached by a double staircase, of two flights, and each flight had twenty-five broad, easy steps. Having ascended the staircase we entered a large square hall, with two apartments from the right and two from the left opening

on to it, and I perceived that there were as many in the other stories above.

"Opposite the door by which we entered was another, from which one descended by the same number of steps and came to a court, and around the court were store-rooms for grain and many little chambers for the servants. This led to a very large garden, full of fruit trees tastefully and skilfully arranged. The hall was hung with tapestry and whatever adornments are meet for a man of rank, and in the middle a table was spread, and the side-board was covered with plates of porcelain laden with all manner of fruit.

"'In sooth, a beautiful and comfortable dwelling-house is this,' said I, 'and must belong to a noble master, and, what with woods and the country, one who has no need for the refinement and delicacy of the city. But perchance you are its owner?'

"'No, not I, but my father,' replied he, 'to whom may it please God to grant long life. He is, I confess, a gentleman of our city; nor unacquainted with courts and the great world, though indeed most of his life has been passed in the country. He has a brother who has long been a gentleman of the Roman Court, where, in fact, he still remains, a most cherished friend of the good Cardinal Vercelli, whose worth and authority are highly esteemed in these parts.' 'And where is that place in Europe,' quoth I, 'wherein the good Cardinal is not venerated?'

"Whilst we were thus talking, there came up another youth of tenderer age, but of no less gracious mien, who bore news of the arrival of his father who had returned from overlooking his estate. And with that uprode the

father himself followed by a groom and another servitor, also on horseback; and he dismounted and straightway came up the stair.

"He was a man, mature in years, nearer to sixty than fifty, kindly and pleasing of visage, and his silver hair and white beard made him seem even older, but added to his dignity. I came forward, did him obeisance with a respect conformable to his years and seeming; and, turning to the elder boy with a charming bearing, he asked, 'Whence comes our guest, for I do not remember to have seen him before either here or in any other place?'

"To this the elder son: 'He comes from Novara, and makes for Turin'. Then, edging close up to his father, and dropping his voice, he gave a hint that he should restrain his curiosity concerning my condition, whereto the elder answered: 'Let him be whomsoever he will, he is welcome; here we willingly do honour and service to strangers from afar'. And I, giving due acknowledgment to his courtesy, said: 'May God so dispose that as now I gratefully accept your entertainment, so, on some other occasion, I may show that I am grateful and forget not'.

"Whilst we were thus in parlance, the servants fetched water for the hands, and thus, being cleansed, we sat at table, according to the appointment of the good elder, who desired, since I was a stranger, to do me honour."

After a conversation on agriculture and astronomy, the party rose from the table, and Tasso was conducted to his apartment, where he enjoyed the luxury of an easy bed and quiet sleep. And next morning, being without money, he set forth on foot for Turin. He had to wade

through mud and ford rivers to get there at this wet season of the year.

Angelo Ingegnari, a Venetian publisher and a scholar of no small note, was returning from his devotions at a convent that lay outside the walls of Turin, when he saw, at the gate of the city, a sad-looking, wayworn tatterdemalion, wild of feature and gesture, and seemingly in very ill health, arguing a point with the warders of the gateway and receiving scant courtesy at their hands. It was Tasso. He bore no passport of health; the plague was devastating Lombardy, and the sentinels refused to let him pass. Now Tasso was well known to Ingegnari; they had met at Rome in 1575, and the Venetian was able to induce the guard to let the wayfarer through. Probably Ingegnari gave him lodging.

Tasso was glad enough now to cast himself on the Estensi for protection; he wrote to Cardinal Luigi entreating him to recommend him to the princes and nobles of his house that were in Turin, and the Cardinal seems to have behaved kindly, for presently we find the poet in the house of the Marquis Filippo d'Este, the holder of a small fief, and son-in-law to the reigning Duke of Savoy. There could be no chance, after this, of entering Emanuele Filiberto's service. Tasso calmed down, and a considerable mental improvement seems to have taken place. He wrote to Cardinal Albano, confessing his folly, and Albano replied, "God grant that you may be fully aware of your mistake, and profit by the lesson as you should, for, by my honour, no one dreams of injuring you: all love you and desire you to live for your worth's sake".

There was little difference between the courts of Italy

in their main characteristics. There was one pervading tenor—to disguise real weakness by a show of splendour. Everywhere one found the same glitter, the same unending revelry, the same profusion of sumptuous banquets, the same kinds of fête on every trivial occasion, the same affectation of complete enjoyment of life. Mock joust succeeds the water-party or the chase, and some theatrical entertainment the joust. The platonic lover mingled his sighs with the moanings of the water-organ, and affected an artificial affinity of the soul with one married lady, while, in secret, he carried on an intimacy of the flesh with another. Everywhere were similar cabals and jealous intrigues, simulations of devotion to the prince and clear perceptions of those of his weaknesses out of which profit might be made. Everywhere courtiers and princes pursued pleasure and personal advantage; not without manifesting real, spontaneous, human kindness at times; but never with the least care for the patient, uncomplaining people, whose honest toil enabled the gay folk to lead a life of vanity; nay, with a contempt, that was growing, for all that sowed and spun. The courts still justified their existence, perhaps, by the presence of some scholarship, some tincture of fine taste; they prided themselves still on the patronage of literature and art. But what lay at the bottom of every man's heart was the instinct of self-preservation or self-advancement, disguised by an artificial reverence for *Onore*, *Precedenza*, *Dignità*.

Turin was a city inferior to both Florence and Ferrara in brilliancy, though its prince was equal if not superior in power to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and vastly superior to Duke Alfonso. For ten centuries the

House of Savoy has proved to be the astutest family in Europe, and, as one of its members confessed, has never lost sight of its own advancement or swerved from the enterprise it finally accomplished. It designed to "eat Italy as an artichoke, leaf by leaf". Emanuele Filiberto and his son, Carlo Emanuele, were not the least able members of their canny house. In the long contest between France and Spain the descendants of Humbert of the White Hand contrived to turn a perilous situation to advantage: they preserved and even extended their territories by playing off one invader against another and making Savoy an important buffer state. Filiberto Emanuele, the reigning Duke, fostered both science and literature; he established museums and libraries, and carried the principles of absolutism to their farthest limits. He had been a gallant soldier, and had never caught the vulgarity of camps; he never swore, and when he spoke his mouth was as clean of deceit as of foulness. He was sociable by nature, but he adopted the defence of apparent pride and reserve. He was conspicuously regular and devout in religious observance, and treated his Duchess with the respect due to her rank, yet mingled it with a winning, petting way that retained her affection, while all the while he was notoriously *homme galant* and the Sultan of the ladies of his court. Yet he was not hypocritical; he merely, like all the men of his time, kept his morals and his religion in separate water-tight compartments, an accomplishment which is said to be a lost art.

Carlo Emanuele, the heir-apparent, was a little creature, pale, restless, all muscle and nerve. The chase never wearied him and he seemed to be independent of sleep.

In mind he was quick, versatile, receptive, and a bit of a poet, a bit of an artist, a little of everything, and able to hold his own with everybody. In later years he was too sanguine and idealistic a ruler, who brought trouble on himself and the State; but he never quailed before disaster, nor ceased to nurture unconquerable hope, courage, and resource.

This young man was quite willing to take Tasso into his service. And it might have come to pass, but the restlessness was beginning again. Tasso's too active brain would not allow of the repose necessary to the recovery of health. He provided his protectors with poetical odes and philosophical dialogues, and it was probably at this time that he wrote a deeply religious sonnet for the Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, who had come to Turin to preside over a solemn religious office.

Judgments of sanctity in the sixteenth century, especially Italian judgments, often appear very singular to the modern Englishman. But no one can apply any standard to Carlo Borromeo without admitting the holiness of his character. He was now in the prime of life, gifted by Nature with a personality of enormous power. The son of the Count of Arona and of the sister of a future Pope, he was brought up on his father's fief at the southern end of beautiful Lago Maggiore. His family connections sufficed to exalt him at an early age to the Cardinalate and the metropolitan See of Milan. He was one of the few men of birth and position that were fitted for the sacred office into which they were thrust; he was a learned theologian, and burned with zeal for the Lord. He hated the show that was deemed indispensable

to his ecclesiastical rank, set about reforming the abuses of the monastic orders, and so doing risked his life (his murder was attempted). His constant endeavour was to improve the education of the clergy. When not engaged in writing homilies on asceticism or preparing sermons, he was for ever on the move, examining into the conduct of his priests or attending to the wants of the poor. Two years before this visit, regardless of danger, he had personally attended to the wretches that were stricken by plague. He hated the fashionable amusements of the time with all the vehement hatred of the sourest Protestant, and was a sincere believer in the existence of witchcraft. He was canonised early in the next century, and his body still lies, dressed in pontifical robes, in a subterranean chapel of his own Duomo. Even to-day the Milanese speak of him with affection and keep his memory green.

His cousin, Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, became his earnest disciple and coadjutor. Federigo was a classical and oriental scholar, and founded the Ambrosian Library. He succeeded Carlo in the See of Milan, and proved to be as earnest, as pious, as energetic in philanthropy, and more enlightened. To know that Filippo Neri was his dear friend is also to know what manner of man he himself was.

The crippled saint that existed in Tasso was full fed by the fire of piety that Borromeo fanned, if, as is believed, he wrote the sonnet on the eucharist now. Though his piety was coloured by fear, there was, nonetheless, something in it, too, of what Novalis calls our "home-sickness"; further, it was allied with principle, and it is no small

testimony to its genuineness that his confessor said that from the age of thirty-five to his death he had conquered all the assaults of really grievous sin.

In two months' time Tasso had worked himself into a perfect fever to get back to Ferrara. His good friend Cardinal Albano and the Cardinal's secretary, Cataneo, wrote from Rome to Alfonso, begging him to receive Tasso into his favour once again. Though there was no great belief at Ferrara or anywhere that there would ever be much improvement in the poet's mental condition, or perhaps on account of it, or because (our motives are mixed) Tasso still wrote fine verse and might continue to bring him glory, Alfonso relented. Tasso promised "to submit to purgation and whatever treatment His Highness might desire," and at the end of February, 1579, he arrived at Ferrara and was received into the palace of the Cardinal Luigi.

CHAPTER XI

SANT' ANNA

Third Wedding of Alfonso Ferrara—Tasso breaks out in Mania—Confinement in the Hospital of Sant' Anna—His Illustrious Visitors—The Prince of Mantua and his Marriages—The Admirable Crichton—Nocturnal Adventures of Prince Vincenzo—Literary Pirates—The Academies and the *Jerusalem Delivered*—Wedding of Don Cesare d'Este—The Strange Experiences of Bianca Capello

DUKE ALFONSO was forty-five years of age; he had married twice, and his wives were both dead, leaving him no heirs. And if he died childless, the rich fief of Ferrara would revert to the Pope. So he cast about for a spouse likely to bear children, and selected Margherita Gonzaga, a healthy, lively lass of sixteen, the daughter of the Duke of Mantua, and sister, therefore, to Vincenzo Gonzaga. For a whole month Ferrara had been busy preparing for the nuptials. On the 23rd February, 1579, Don Alfonso d'Este, kinsman to Duke Alfonso, arrived at Mantua accompanied by twenty-five cavaliers. He came to represent the Duke and act as the Duke's proxy, and, next day, he placed the ring on Margherita's finger. The bride's father wished the consummation of marriage to take place in the capital city of the new Duchess. She was to remain at the villa of Belvedere, and rest there for two days before making her

triumphal entry into Ferrara. But Aurelio Libramonti wrote to Margherita's father that "concerning this question of consummation of marriage, the Duke says it is not his wont to let his affairs wait until the moon bursts into a blaze; but, for the satisfaction of your Highness, it shall be postponed. But the rooms at the *boschetta* are not fit, since they are unused, and consequently the Duke will convey his bride secretly by way of the gardens to the city, and she will return in the same way next morning for the public entry." The Duke and Madama d'Urbino, though the latter "was not well," met the bride and conveyed her with great pomp to the villa, and withdrew towards nightfall. But Madama Leonora, writing to her brother Luigi, says that at night time the Duchess stole away *occultamente* to the castle and slept there, returning in the morning in the same secret manner. Her entry into the city was made with due solemnity, and accompanied by a flourish and magnificence that even Ferrara had hardly witnessed before. For it was hoped that she would perpetuate the glorious line of d'Este and prove the salvation of the state. The beauty and chivalry of Mantua and Ferrara hastened to share in the feastings, joustings, tourneyings and masqueradings for which Ferrara was so renowned, and abandoned themselves to a month of enjoyment.

Every lodging in the city was crammed with people of distinguished position, and Tasso ought to have been quite content with his back room in the Cardinal's palace. Of course, with so many noble guests present and so much bustle and excitement going on, no one noticed him, and he deemed himself slighted. He was not content, as he

himself tells us, unless he was *primus inter pares*. The attention of princes and nobles was directed elsewhere. On the 12th March he left his rooms; the noisy revels excited him; the inattention of old friends to himself seemed designed to mock him; his dudgeon rose to fury, and burst forth in a maniacal storm. He rushed to the palace of the Bentivogli, where he only found the lady of the house and some other noble dames. He indulged them with a volley of abuse directed against the Duke, the new Duchess, the whole House of Este, and the gentlemen of the court. Then he ran wildly to the Castello. He insisted on seeing the Duchess; he demanded the return of his manuscripts; he must save his honour from calumny; his enemies conspire to make him out a heretic; they design his death. The ladies of the court were blanched with fear; they tried to soothe him, but he continued to stutter out invective and dreadful accusations; nobody escaped the venom of his reckless tongue, certainly not the bride. Some one runs off to tell the Duke, and Torquato is carried off to the Hospital of St. Anna, happily quite near at hand.

In the previous century the spirit of the Renascence exhibited a growing humanity of feeling, less pronounced than its intellectual and artistic manifestations, but not destined to undergo such rapid decay. To this development of human pity the charitable house of St. Anna owed its foundation. It contained chambers destined for maniacs. Into one of these Tasso was clapped and chained down. The chain was not used as punishment; it served the purpose of a strait-waistcoat.

Men, that are the children of Destiny, play at freedom

and entertain themselves with magnificent illusions; but their sport is subject to rude reminders, their indulgence apt to be sharply broken, as the Mighty Mother pursues her even, ironical way. Here was a man of naturally tender heart and loving disposition, normally gentle, sensitive, refined, a scholar of no mean attainment, nay, more than that, the greatest genius of his generation, a magician of the mind, powerful to touch the souls of men with secret fire and transport them away from the dull banality of every-day things to a brighter world; and now—he is a "ruined piece of nature," chained to a ring in a maniac's cell, his wits quite gone, "a sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch".

But he was not starved, nor whipped, nor put into a dark cell, as most madmen were in the sixteenth century. The restraint of the chain was a necessity, for Tasso admits that he thrashed a warder, and adds that the man asked for what he got. The chamber in which he was confined was by no means the dismal cell where Byron spent two hours meditating the "Lament of Tasso" and Goethe and generations of travellers have inscribed their names, but a much airier apartment. And when, after a few days, he became more composed, his shackles were removed and he was taken to a better room. Soon he recovered sufficiently to write to Scipione Gonzaga, "O miserable that I am! I had intended to compose two glorious epics, four tragedies, of which I have already framed the argument, and many useful and beautiful works in prose, and unite eloquence with philosophy in such a way as to leave an eternal memory to the world —and I aspired to the highest pinnacle of fame! But

now, borne down by the weight of intolerable calamities, I think nothing of honour and glory, but only of my tormenting thirst; and oh! that, as a common man, I might spend my life at liberty in some poor hut and there, even if not right in mind (though I could not be saner than I am), yet be without such agonising infirmity. I might possess at least the rights of a brute if not those of a man, and quench the thirst whereby I am a-fire, at the springs and streams. Nor is my anguish, great as it is, so horrible as that prospect of its continuance which is ever before me; so that I feel unable to write or think. The dread of endless imprisonment, then, increases my misery, but even more so do the indignities to which I am subjected. My beard, my hair, my dress, are foul, the place is damp, and if, of old, solitude was wont to drive me to seek companionship at unreasonable times, now it is dreadful to bear." Tasso probably exaggerates his condition, but he had been accustomed to luxury as well as freedom; he was very particular about his personal appearance and rather a dandy in dress. To add to his wretchedness, he was unable to confess or receive the sacrament, for these religious offices were denied to the insane. If, anywhere in Europe, lunatics were treated with consideration, it was in Italy; but mediæval theories of possession by devils had firm hold of the Catholic mind.

As he got better, his situation was ameliorated, and his physician seems to have treated him with unwonted wisdom. But "the gate remained shut in his face," and perhaps he was right when he said it was "enough to make the sanest mad".

However, he was allowed writing materials, which he

employed on ceaseless, futile petitions to Alfonso, the Princesses, the Emperor Rudolf II., a great patron of literature, to Rudolf's brother, the Cardinal Albert, to Scipione Gonzaga, by whom he hoped to influence Vincenzo Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua, and through him the Duchess Margherita, and, through her, the Duke. His letters are quite coherent. Listen to this piteous appeal to Alfonso: "I throw myself at your clement feet, O most merciful Lord. I entreat you to pardon me the untrue, mad, and audacious words whereby I was cast into prison."

For a long period Alfonso had behaved with forbearance and consideration. But now he had entirely lost patience. The world has bestowed all its compassion on Tasso; all its indignation on the Duke. But those who have had the misfortune to hold close relations with genius will be inclined to think that there were extenuating circumstances. Intimacy with genius is apt to reveal irrelevant and irritating inconsistencies, and a mad genius is by no means a desirable companion. The Duke had an earnest desire for Tasso's permanent cure; he desired his safety and that of others; above all he wished to preserve the pleasantness of his court, where his young duchess led frolics that were more distractingly frivolous than ever, and everybody was anxious to bid dull care depart.

But the Duke's mind was troubled, and he was becoming irritable. The carking responsibilities of government were not easy to set aside. To support the unending revelry and display, Alfonso was draining the State dry. His ministers hastened to grow rich and ground the faces

of the people; justice was sold; the peasant had to give his own labour and that of his ox to the Duke; the nobility were prodigal and most of them were in debt; there had been an insurrection in Urbino, and the props that supported all this splendour were rotten and threatened to collapse; there were 6,000 Jew parasites in Ferrara alone; the customs were farmed by Jews. Alfonso was beginning to grow old, and if his latest duchess proved barren like her two predecessors the glory of the Estensi would vanish; he had achieved the bitter enmity of Lucrezia, and impecunious Luigi and he were on unbrotherly terms. Alfonso became a little surly, unsympathetic and morose.

By-and-by, Tasso began to sing again, not, indeed, with the old rapture, the outpourings of the free thrush on the topmost bough, but the melancholy warble of the caged linnet, that renews its ancient habit in the intervals of beating its wings against the bars. He had decent furniture now, good food, and, above all, his books. At first he was under the care of Agostino Mosti, whom at one time he calls a harsh gaoler, yet at another time describes, approvingly, as a "gentleman who is devoted to religion and has always persecuted heretics with Catholic zeal for the love of Christ (!); a scholar, and so courteous that he would never act cruelly of his own initiative; but he is under orders". When, shortly after the commencement of Tasso's confinement, Agostino died, Giulio Mosti succeeded to his post; certainly he was a man of kindly heart, and after him came a third prior, one Vincenzi. The Princesses visited Tasso; so did gay young Vincenzo Gonzaga, who under the pretext of wanting to see his

sister, came to Ferrara for a frolic. Michel, Sieur de Montaigne, that most indulgent and quietly ironical of all the spectators of life, tells us that he saw him, too, during his imprisonment at Ferrara, and that he experienced "more vexation than compassion in regarding his pitiable condition, self-centred, not knowing himself or his works, which have been published, without his sanction, in a form shapeless and incorrect". But Montaigne only spent one day at Ferrara, and the sentence concerning Tasso was inserted into the second edition of his essays, some years later. Montaigne had a wretched memory, as he himself admits, relying on his servants to bring things to his mind, and not quite sure of himself then. If he saw Tasso, Solerti thinks it must have been when the poet was out walking with his attendant. The note was added by Montaigne after the *Gerusalemme* was published and Tasso's fame established. At present he was not so highly considered a person as he became, nor had his renown spread so far beyond the petty principalities of the peninsula that M. de Montaigne, with one day at his disposal and the Duke to visit, should spare time to visit St. Anna.

Tasso was not the only poet of gentle birth and fair social position on whom calamity had fallen. While he lay incarcerated in St. Anna, Fray José Indio, the Carmelite monk of Guadalajara, saw Camoens "die in a hospital, without a sheet to cover him, after having triumphed in the Indies and sailed five thousand five hundred leagues by sea". Tasso spent seven weary years at Sant' Anna—years of improvement and relapse. As usual, states of depression alternated with states of excite-

ment. He wrote to Gonzaga very often, and in one letter we read: "My mind is dull; my imagination black; my pen indolent, and my hand almost refusing its office; my senses seem frozen, overwhelmed, stunned, inert". Illustrious people tried to brighten these dark days by visiting him, and his friends did not desert him. His dear friend Gonzaga was in Ferrara in 1581, but it does not appear that he saw Tasso—an interview might have been unwise just then. The youngest of the Manuzi, Aldo, whose youth had been so wonderful, came. Aldo had published a beautiful edition of Tasso's occasional verses which compassionate Guarini, Tasso's co-servitor and poetic rival, had edited with friendly diligence and care. Muzio Manfredi came too, the author of "Semiramide," a drama that, until Alfieri's time, was accounted inferior only to the tragedy on which Tasso was now busily employing his quieter moments, the "Torrismondo". Next came a young hero-worshipper, Giulio Segni, from Bologna, bearing an introduction from Papio, Tasso's old instructor in the mysteries of law. It is said that Segni's nervousness prevented him from speaking a word, which was a pity, for he was a man of parts; however, at the next interview, he gathered himself together, and was able to talk. Also Giustavini and Bernardo Castello arrived from Genoa. The former was a philosopher and physician, who lamented to see the pitiable state into which Tasso had fallen. Giustavini found Tasso on a high tower rapt in speculation. (The tower is probably a figure of speech.) When asked what he was thinking about, the poet replied, "I think and think again, and thinking maddens me". Castello, a painter and engraver, gave him a picture of the

Saviour, which inspired a sonnet, and which he always preserved with loving care. Francesco Terzi, a painter and engraver of Bergamo, the ancestral city of the Tassi, also arrived, bearing for Tasso a "stupendous and excellent work," a volume of engravings, portraits of the House of Austria. And there were many others who came, among them Antonio Costantini, the young secretary of the Medicean ambassador, with whom Tasso formed an intimate friendship that endured throughout his life.

Sometimes Tasso was very ill, but between whiles he was busy with his pen evolving a vast amount of poetry and prose. Writing to Maurizio Cataneo, 18th October, 1581, he says he now knows that there are two kinds of spirits that visit him, devils and human souls. "I hear human cries, and particularly of women and boys; there is derisive laughter, and I am worried by noises of animals and inanimate objects moved by hands. There is also diabolical witchcraft and enchantment; and yet I am not certain; for rats, that are as if possessed by the devil, overrun the room; or human artifice may be the explanation. But I am bewitched, for sure, and the operations of this necromancy are very powerful." He adds that he tears up his letters before he has finished them and his anger is easily aroused. Two years later he wrote to Girolamo Mercuriale, a famous physician of Padua, entreating help; he is persuaded that he is bewitched. And, two years later still, he tells Cataneo that his letters disappear very strangely, being carried off by a "foletto" or sprite or by some magician. "Of this I have many proofs; a loaf of bread being snatched away under my

very eyes before sunset, and a plate of fruit taken away when that excellent young Polish gentleman was with me." He complains that gloves, letters and books come out of locked chests and are found mysteriously scattered over the floor. He has terrors by night and hears strange sounds; he sees "the Glorious Virgin and her Son surrounded by a halo of colour, who appeared to me that I might not despair". The Duke, too, communicated with him by signals.

Everybody seems to have been kind. The gay ladies of the court went to Sant' Anna and ministered to him in those dark hours. Marfisa d'Este, now the wife of the Marquis, afterwards Prince, of Massa and Carrara, asked him to spend a day at her villa of Madaler, but stipulated that he should be driven thither and back under strict guardianship. The Duchess Lucrezia had him to stay with her at Belvidere, but his violence frightened her and she speedily sent him back. There was always a difficulty in inducing him to return to the hospital, and the doctors despaired of his recovering his reason.

Kindest of all the kind hearts that felt for Tasso in his misfortune was Angelo Grillo, a member of the learned and liberal order of Benedictine monks, a man of mark in his day, for he was a mathematician, a philosopher, and a poet. Grillo was a Genoese, born of a patrician family; he might have been a man of mark in the government of the Republic, but he elected to serve Christ, and then refused bishoprics that were offered him, for, said he, "why should I contort my neck when God has set it straight?" He introduced himself to Tasso in a letter marked by the admiration of a generous mind. Tasso

had conceived a lasting love for the Benedictine order when, a little lad, he listened to the monks of La Cava telling of Palestine; and St. Benedict was one of the brighter appearances in his disordered visions. Tasso answered this Benedictine in two sonnets, one of which plays on a name after the prevailing taste for conceits, and the other is very touching: it tells of how he sows what another shall reap, how he waters the plant that yields its fruit to another hand, while deep in his own heart he hides his woe. This reply touched some vibrating chord in Grillo's sweet, sympathetic nature. He hurried to Ferrara and got Alfonso's permission to visit Tasso as often as he would. From that time he was constantly at Ferrara, spending whole days at Sant' Anna, and, when he was not there, he got Zanobi, a Benedictine of Ferrara, to act as his substitute, to keep undesirable visitors away from Tasso, to watch over his health, to give the captive, as far as he was able, all that he wanted, and to serve him in every way he could.

Grillo tells us that the poet's confinement was not due, as he imagined, to the harshness, but rather to the affection of the Duke. But Tasso's unwise and unceasing appeals to half the potentates of Europe could not fail to irritate Alfonso.

During Tasso's detention at Sant' Anna, there were many gay occasions for festival at Ferrara, and these he did not fail to sing. The Count Annibale Turco led Tasso's old sweetheart, Laura Peperara, to the altar, Donna Lavinia della Rovere was also married to Alfonso, Marquis of Pescara. Vincenzo Gonzaga, on the pretext of visiting his sister, came to enjoy the revels that were

always prepared for him, and to bask in the smiles of fair, light women. He often visited Tasso.

Vincenzo, heir-apparent to the ducal throne of Mantua, was a fine engaging young fellow, but ill-governed, and far too susceptible to female attraction. He was a sad vexation to his parents. It is said, nor need the statement be doubted, that ladies did not always lower their eyes when the lad made bold advance. His irregularities were such that his father married him as quickly as possible. The bride was the daughter of Alessandro Farnese, who achieved such brilliant renown as statesman and warrior in the Netherlands. It was not long before there arose a question of nullity of marriage. Each party laid the blame on the other side. The Duke was very desirous that Vincenzo should beget heirs, and physicians, theologians and jurisconsults were appealed to. They indulged in heated arguments and came to no conclusion, "for," says Litta, "each remained confirmed in his own opinion". Pope Gregory sent Archbishop Carlo Borromeo to terminate the scandal, and the bride went into a convent and took the veil, St. Carlo himself officiating at her profession. The Gonzaghi now cast about for another bride, and sought the hand of Leonora, the daughter of Cosimo, Grand Duke of Tuscany. But the Duke of Parma, annoyed at the repudiation of his daughter, and especially at the cause assigned, took care that the story should be circulated that this was nothing but a pretext of the Gonzaghi to cover the fault of Vincenzo. The report spread rapidly and got ready credence, for Vincenzo's former scandalous life gave it colour. Now Leonora was to carry a large dowry with her, and the Grand Duke

VINCENZO GONZAGA

PAINTER UNKNOWN. UFFIZI

refused to consent to the wedding unless "diplomacy" should be able to remove his doubts. "Diplomacy" effected this in a manner so singular and revolting that it would hardly be credible, even to those who know the age best, were it not authenticated in the most indisputable way by a cloud of contemporary witnesses. The Prince went to Venice and established his virility on the person of a young "virgo intacta," in the presence of the ministers of the courts of Florence and Mantua. The trial was made with all due formality, and was sanctioned, on grounds of high policy, by the most eminent ecclesiastics, who only stipulated that it should not take place on a Friday. Leonora, a woman of a good deal of worldly wisdom, was then given in marriage to the successful young Prince, but we learn "non fu unica moglie". He also fell violently in love with the beautiful Countess of Scandiano, who seems to have approved of his advances. He paid her long visits at her castle, and in reply to the remonstrances of his mother, wrote that he "loved her as one may adore a sister".

Another scandal attaches to this young Prince of literary tastes, passionate temper and dissolute manners. One of his tutors was James, son of Robert Crichton, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, a young man only two years his senior, and known to posterity as the Admirable Crichton. This marvellous youth, whose fame ran through Europe, was equally excellent at fencing and dialects; he achieved an enormous renown in Italy, whither he had come with the exaggerated reputation of having vanquished the whole staff of the Sorbonne in Paris in twelve different languages! Old Sperone Speroni admitted Crichton to

his friendship, and his society was sought by the younger Aldo and all the wits and literati of Italy. He electrified the senate of Venice by an eloquent harangue on the absurdity of education. He appears to have belonged to that brilliant class, spendthrift of intellect, who exhaust themselves of great endowments in halfpenny disbursements, and are ready to sell their immortal souls if only they may say a striking thing or secure some momentary applause: at Padua he amazed the assembled professors of the University by a clever oration in praise of ignorance. At Mantua he killed the most famous duellist in Italy; and, adopting the rôle of a quick-change actor, held the court in raptures for five mortal hours while he assumed fifteen different characters in succession. He was appointed tutor to Vincenzo, and there would seem to have been some rivalry between them. Crichton was in high favour with the Mantuans, while Vincenzo was disliked, for he was haughty, arrogant, prodigal and licentious, on bad terms with his parents and kept short of money by them. Crichton's letters indicate that that prodigy was not wholly without enemies in Mantua. Among them was, probably, the young Prince, whom he had outshone by the brilliance of his accomplishments, and, perhaps, displeased by some success in love. What followed has been differently related, but nearly always with an undue bias against Gonzaga. Careful examination of documents would seem to reveal the following facts.

One summer night in 1582 Crichton was strolling along a street and met Vincenzo accompanied by one Lanzone. It was so dark that recognition was impossible, and Crichton took the wall and would not give way. Thereupon

the Prince knocked him down and struck him when he was on the ground. Crichton leaped to his feet, and drew and attacked Lanzone, whom he wounded mortally. Vincenzo tried to defend his friend, and, having a buckler, succeeded, not merely in saving himself but in running Crichton through. Crichton then besought pardon and that the Prince would grant him grace of life. The Prince is said to have believed that Crichton was only slightly wounded. He walked quickly home, and, hearing that Crichton and Lanzone were both dead, went to bed quite calmly and had an excellent night's rest. Meanwhile, Mantuan citizens, hearing the noise, had come up to the scene of the fight and carried Crichton to an apothecary's, where he died shortly after the arrival of two priests. Lanzone died on the spot. There was great indignation in Mantua, and the judicial authorities took the matter up. The Duke in particular was very angry, but the Captain of Justice found that the Prince had killed Crichton in self-defence. The dead Scot was buried hurriedly and privately, and the matter was hushed up.

This was not the only brawl in which this last Prince of the Renascence, patron of letters and swashbuckler, indulged. One night in 1587, when out with companions in search of adventure, he was prowling about a low quarter of the city that was chiefly devoted to the worship of Venus. He perceived Rogero Detroffeis, the court organist, talking to some woman at a window. The Prince, out of jealousy or pure insolence, told one of his companions to order the inamorato to sheer off. Rogero, who did not recognise the Prince, refused. The order was repeated, and Rogero, being somewhat slow in obey-

ing, the Prince attacked him so violently as not only to wound the unfortunate organist, but also a member of his own escort. Rogero besought pardon, and the Prince, turning on his heel, walked back to his palace, and went quietly to sleep. The castellan tried to seize the Prince's attendants, but Vincenzo contrived their escape; and the illness of his father, the Duke, prevented further inquiry. The ill terms on which Vincenzo stood with his father, and even with his mother, who wrote piteous appeals to him concerning his scandalous conduct, determined him to leave the state and fill his scantly provided purse in the service of one of the Great Powers; but, just then, the death of the sickly Duke, his father, left the throne vacant for his accession.

No great fête, no important marriage passed without some canzona or epithalamium or prose-piece flowing from Tasso's pen. But when Madama Leonora lay ill, Tasso entreated Panigorola, the great Lenten preacher, to tell her that he kissed her hand, but could not make rhymes on her sickness "from a certain repugnance of his genius," but he was willing to serve her in any other way, and especially in cheerful verses. And when she died, though the poetic tears of other courtiers blotted many pages, and a book of threnodies in Latin and Italian by various hands was dedicated to Luigi, her favourite brother, Tasso remained silent. When poets realise the approach or presence of death, when sorrow comes really close to them, they are usually mute. It requires the passage of time, the blurring of deep feeling, some irrepressible animation of soul, before pity can assume luxurious trappings and burst forth into the comfort of song.

If anything could have been nicely calculated to vex still further the troubled soul of Tasso it was the conduct of publishers and critics. Poor poet! already uneasy enough in his durance, though comforted by a little box containing some dried grains of the precious blood of St. Andrew that Scipione Gonzaga had sent him, and firmly persuaded that it would restore him to health. His mind was still unquiet, his heart heavy, he was irritated by surveillance, his best friends would be unwilling to cross the Duke's mood, his welcome escapes into the world of imagination that came like a flight into the fresh breeze only left him more exhausted than before, drained and more despondent; and now a cruel world took advantage of his seclusion, and, though it could not rob him of his fame, deprived him of the material advantages of his toil. Though Alfonso kept a sharp eye on the many fragments of the great poem that Tasso had spread abroad among princes and his learned friends, rapacious publishers contrived to issue it. For, among the copies thus circulated, one had fallen into the hands of Francesco de' Medici, now Grand Duke of Florence. Francesco had obtained it because he was anxious to see what kind of poem it was that should confer immortality on his rival. Among his servants was one Orazio or Celio Malespini, a man of literary tastes and bad character. Somehow this man contrived to get hold of the manuscript. Shortly afterwards it was discovered that Malespini and one Lari, a poet, were accomplices in forgery and theft. Lari was captured and hanged, but Malespini contrived to escape to Venice, and there the wretch, with the co-operation of a printer, worked secretly

and hurriedly, and issued the first ten cantos of the *Gerusalemme* and the "arguments" of the remainder. The cantos published were remarkable for omissions and mistakes. The news of this vile piracy, and what he would esteem even viler, the mangling of his verse, was calculated to disturb the mental balance of a perfectly sane author. Tasso was very angry, but he was still more mortified. He justly blamed the negligence of the Grand Duke and the supine indifference and injustice of the Venetian Government. Malespini issued an apology. His excuse was that he had yielded to the solicitations of those who burned to possess this glorious work!

Angelo Ingegnari, the same man who had come to Tasso's rescue at the gates of Turin, visited Ferrara to negotiate the marriage between Alderino Cibo, the Marquis of Carrara, and Marfisa, the ever gay young widow of the House of Estensi, who had only been the wife of her cousin for a few months. While there Ingegnari transcribed the entire poem, and, indignant at the wretched edition furnished by Malespini, he got two others published, one at Casa Maggiore, the other at Parma. Both editions, however, were sadly incorrect. Malespini at once brought out another edition, wherein he begs the reader to pardon any blemishes it might contain, "since, owing to the unhappy condition of Signor Tasso it has not received the benefit of the author's revision". Then follows a hypocritical prayer that "cruel Fortune will restore the great poet to a world that, in that happy event, will have eternal cause of gratitude to that successor of so many Mecænases, the liberal and magnificent Duke, whose affection and zeal are doing everything for the poet's recovery".

Meanwhile Guarini, Tasso's great rival and friend, had been employing his acute judgment to remove the errors and fill in the gaps of the *Gerusalemme*. Febo Bonna, a young gentleman attached to the house of Count Strozzi of Ferrara, published the results at Ferrara. This edition contained Tasso's allegorical apology for the poem at the end of the book. Bonna had sought Tasso's help but had not found the poet very tractable. Edition after edition, all with slight variations of text, appeared in rapid succession. The poem produced an electric effect; there was a breathless rush for copies, and the demand was far greater than the supply. Two thousand copies of Ingegnari's edition were sold in a single day. As was the case with Ariosto's "Orlando," the *Gerusalemme* was declaimed at every court; lordly halls, silent cloisters resounded with its honied sweets; it was discussed by innumerable literary societies; it penetrated the recesses of Alpine valleys; it re-echoed from across the Alps; it excited wonder in the cities of the great plain; it aroused the enthusiasm of literary Europe. A part of the *Gerusalemme* appeared in England, translated into Latin hexameters in 1584. Elizabeth, the Queen, thought Alfonso lucky in having Tasso as his poet, and said she envied him as Alexander envied Achilles, that had Homer to immortalise him.

Tasso's friend, Aldo Manuzio, who visited him at Sant' Anna, lost no time in setting his sails to the favouring breeze. He was too sharp a man of business to be entirely loyal to his friend. He published *The Verse and Prose Pieces of Torquato Tasso*, and the *Aminta*, to his own, but hardly to Tasso's gain, unless increase of fame were sufficient recompense. "All the compositions of Tasso in

prose and verse," says Solerti, "were printed by treachery, or at least without his knowledge or consent, and always with such dexterity that he never received a farthing for these works. Who can wonder at his wrath against printers who 'have neither probity nor consideration,' to whom he was always 'our good Tasso,' 'our dear Tasso,' but, not a whit the less, our Tasso profitably slaughtered."

And now the learned opened fire. Who ever found much of the milk of human kindness in a pedant? His blood does not circulate so meekly nor is his pulse so tranquil as might be supposed. He often burns with a fierce internal fire of vanity, and pique and spleen run fast to feed the flame. What mattered it that Tasso was ill, afflicted with mental disease, and tortured by the confinement employed to cure it? Such considerations might have weighed with the mere natural man, but they never entered for a moment into the highly cultivated minds of these men of letters.

Into what futile groups of self-complaisant pedants had the Academies degenerated! The card of admission required by the Florentine Academy gives evidence of their quality. If you wrote two tomes of scholia on a single sonnet of Petrarch, and you made no enemies in the circle thereby, you might be received by that select company. The Academies had become little better than mutual admiration societies. Literary hypocrisies, eternal pseudo-Platonic discussions, minute points of grammar, and a chorus of mutual congratulations were only interrupted by the vehemence of concealed jealousies that broke out in abuse which was a travesty of it all.

These literary clubs had done good service; they had

insisted on architectonic principles of composition, on purity of language, and on rules of style. But their perception was limited by mechanical perfection; they restrained the free movement of the writer; they were the enemies of natural development; and their lucubrations only tended to the crystallisation of form and the stultification of idea. Chief of the Academies was the Florentine, with which the Della Cruscan Academy was ultimately united. As De Sanctis says, the Accademia della Crusca was the literary counterpart of the Council of Trent. It did its best to destroy the peculiar charm of the Neapolitan and Tuscan and Venetian dialects, and to remove those local felicities of diction that, happily, survive today. It strove to construct an artificial language, within the strict rules of which the unhappy writer should be rigidly confined, and to formulate conventions beyond the artifices of which he might not peer. The literary world was to become a critical world from which all freshness, brightness and spontaneity were to be banished. Ariosto and Boccaccio were to be as Holy Writ, and everything was to be gauged by pedantic interpretations of their authority.

The Tuscan tongue is distinguished from all the forms of Italian speech by its lively grace, its delicate nuances, its sparkling simplicity. It has an indescribable quality that is all its own. Fortunately, Boccaccio and Ariosto wrote in this dialect, and it became, thereby, the literary standard of excellence. The Della Cruscan Academy found Tasso lacking in certain subtle refinements of this dialect; they applied the infallible touchstone of their own microscopic pedantry, and discovered blemishes on every

page. They flourished their crow quills and attacked him with the venemous ferocity peculiar to scholars. They ignored the radiant beauty of the poem, and fell foul of the matter, the wording, the tropes, the syntax and the style; they dotted every i, and crossed every t, and then said that, according to the rules of their own affected elegance, the letters should not be there at all. The inmate of Sant' Anna received no gentle handling; but such extravagant criticism produced a natural reaction. The *Gerusalemme Liberata* found as many defenders as assailants, and was favoured with the attention of all Italy. A stronger, less sensitive man would have laughed at the criticisms. But Tasso was impressible. He felt every wound; he magnified the persecution and regarded his assailants as very serious foes.

In truth, Tasso's natural temperament inclined him to respect authority; his education and surroundings impelled him to bow down to it. Also, he had committed himself to a poetical theory in early youth, and he found himself hampered by his own utterances. The world came under the spell of his poetry; it ignored the critics, and some of them had sufficient judgment or grace to capitulate; the rest became silent. But the confidence of the critics sowed seeds of hesitation that ultimately dominated Tasso. Not so many years later he set himself to rewrite the entire work in conformity with the strictest demands of religion and the most pedantic requirements of the literati. The sensibilities of his fine and delicate soul had been bruised by harshness and they became deadened by the continuance of disease. The *Gerusalemme Conquistata*, the revised edition of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, did not

appear until near the end of Tasso's life. Its verse is correct enough, but it is empty of all poetry, of every charm. The first editions lie in obscure corners, and on dusty shelves. The reprints were done in a spirit of duty, and they remain unread.

This literary tornado burst on Tasso in 1585, just when he was suffering from great depression of spirits. One Pellegrini led the van. He wrote a dialogue, wherein it is debated whether Ariosto or Tasso is the greater poet. In the discussion that followed and in which innumerable literary clubs took part, the favour of patrons was not disregarded. Scurrilous witticisms answered virulent criticisms and the whole literary world became a furious cross-fire of sheets of paper and spluttering pens. Tasso had to hear that his style was flat, obscure, intricate, forced, full of outlandish and unintelligible words. His rhymes were too jingling, they were too rough. The poem lacked proportion, nay, worse, it lacked morality; what of Olindo and Sofronia? The episode is pure and charming, and the love-scenes, the dear inconsistent women, all that the critics objected to, are precisely what everybody else loved then, what the world values to-day.

The vanity of the egoist, the self-sufficiency of the book-learned, and the love of excitement of everybody caused a deafening squeaking and croaking. Tasso was obliged to answer men that he considered to be great men, though they were but chattering crows. He did so with no little dignity, though he justly complained of a want of magnanimity in those who persecuted a man already overwhelmed, and he referred to the unkindness of men who, in the days of his prosperity, offered friendship that he

had not solicited and were now equally eager to secure an enmity which he, however, refused to grant. "And thus shall I hold my soul better controlled, pursuing the even tenour of my way, and losing less love than will be agreeable to some; yet since the chase is swifter than my flight, it is no wonder that I am surrounded."

It was a dastardly attack, and Tasso's real friends felt it to be so!

Tasso was less frequently disturbed by maniacal attacks during his later years at Sant' Anna; but, every time an attempt was made to enlarge his liberty, hallucination speedily returned. He found solace in literary activity, but his memory grew weaker, and religious doubts and scruples returned from time to time. He tried to mitigate the trial and tedium of incarceration by complying with every request for verse or prose, indifferent as to whether inspiration came or no. His strong family affection remained untouched; his delight in courts (in spite of an affectation to disdain them) was unabated; and he secured court-service with the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Duke of Mantua, for his sisters' sons.

Margherita Gonzaga, like her two predecessors, had not blessed Alfonso with heirs. So hoping that, if he could strengthen his influence, the Papacy would not claim Ferrara as a lapsed fief, the Duke put his jealousy of the house of Medici aside, as he had done in his first marriage, and wedded Don Cesare d'Este, a gentleman of questionable birth, but legitimatised by Papal Bull, to Virginia dei Medici, the daughter of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke, by Camilla Martelli, his second (morganatic) wife. Camilla belonged to a noble Florentine family,

and had been one of the two favourite mistresses of Cosimo, but in those days of unwonted puritanical reform in the Ancient Church, ecclesiastical pressure had persuaded him to marry the lady—a novel step in the direction of giving more consideration to the woman in sex-relationship. The wedding of Don Cesare was, according to custom, the occasion of great festivity, first at Florence and afterwards at Ferrara, when the princely couple moved thither. Those interesting squirts and hydraulic surprises played their usual antics in the Boboli gardens, and there were pageants in the streets of Florence that were miracles of invention. In one, the poets of Italy were represented, and, among them, Tasso. He wrote, thanking the Florentines for doing him so great an honour, even as Socrates was honoured by being granted a place on the Aristophanic stage!

The attack of the pedants made Tasso more anxious than ever to get free. He moved heaven and earth to that end: the Pope, the Emperor, the Grand Duke, Dukes, Princes, Cardinals, all the men of quality and reputation that he could approach; he even appealed to the city of the Tassi, and the Bergamesque fathers received entreaties at intervals, to do what they could. He now sent sonnets and some madrigals to the famous Bianca Capello, the morganatic wife of Francesco, reigning Grand Duke of Tuscany; lines written, as he says, "with a trembling hand".

The experiences that befell this lady make singular reading. She was a beautiful, fascinating woman, belonging to one of the aristocratic families of Venice, for the Capelli were registered in the Golden Book of heredi-

tary legislators. Bartolommeo Capello, a scion of the house, married a daughter of the great family of Morosini. Pellegrina Morosini brought her husband a great dower, and she is said to have been modest and cultivated. To this couple Bianca was born two years after their marriage; but the mother died just at the time when the daughter most needed her maternal care—when she was ten years of age. Her father married again. The step-mother was cursed with a bad temper and shrewish tongue; she was full of whims and treated the child roughly, finally handing her over to the entire charge of an old matron. Now at this time there resided in Venice a young Florentine scapegrace, one Piero, of the noble but decayed house of Buonaventuri. Piero was twenty-four, of good presence and winning manners, and not destitute of ability; he was amorous, ready to sit on a barrel of gunpowder, if by that way he could get at a sweetheart, and, in fact, just the kind of young fellow likely to turn the head of an inexperienced girl of fifteen. Piero came across Bianca, and there were stolen glances and whispered words, and, in no short space of time, secret interviews. Lovers' vows were exchanged, and a promise to marry. A new world, palpitating with delight, a world full of hope and enchantment, burst on the young girl, wearied, as she was, of a tiresome home, a step-mother's tongue, an ancient governess, and the monotony of a solitary chamber. Piero had a cajoling way with him, and, before very long, a little judicious bribery won the connivance of a corrupt servant, and Piero was admitted by night to Bianca's chamber, or she crept stealthily to the place where Piero lodged. The young pair were in constant

BIANCA CAPELLO

ALESS. ALLORI. UFFIZI

fear of discovery, however, and, indeed, the situation was hardly likely to remain long concealed; so they determined to flee to Florence. When their flight was detected, the indignant Senate issued an order for their capture, and Bianca's life was declared forfeit, for she had tarnished the honour of a proud caste. But the fugitives reached Florence in safety, and the Buonaventuri gave them hiding, and tried to hush the matter up. The couple were married; but Piero got tired of a quiet life, and perhaps a little weary of his young wife also. He was a vain, restless, reckless young fellow; he went abroad a good deal, bragging about the adventure to his friends. It came to the ears of Don Francesco, then heir-apparent to the ducal throne. Like Francesco Maria of Urbino, this young prince was interested in science, and especially clever as a mechanician, but not so absorbed by these interests as to be indifferent to amorous intrigue. He found occasion to visit Bianca, and at once fell a captive to her beauty and charm. Piero had by this time discovered that his whim had cost him somewhat dear, and was quite happy to find that, after all, he might reap considerable advantage from it. He allowed Don Francesco to court his wife, hoping to shine in court-circles and enjoy a pension.

Francesco showed all the signs of sincere passion. He deluged Bianca with verses that were far above the average of those inspirations with which Love visits the lover and afflicts the lover's friends; his poetic impulse was awakened; and if these canzonette were not really of his own composition, he certainly animated others to write well. Before long Bianca became his mistress and

was lodged secretly in his palace. All this had happened twenty-three years before Tasso sent Bianca the madrigals. She had not merely obtained the passionate devotion of a princely lover: she preserved it. Francesco was married to an Archduchess of Austria, and the unhappiness that attended the union may have accounted for his irregular life and fugitive loves. But he yielded his whole heart to Bianca. Piero, who grew arrogant, and treated the nobles of the court insolently, was murdered in the public street, and the Archduchess of Austria died. So, following the example of his father, the widower rendered his relations with Bianca respectable by making her his wife —a step that would never have been dreamed of before the sittings of the Council of Trent. Francesco espoused Bianca secretly at first, but after a time there was a public wedding. The Italian courts hastened to do her homage. Venice, that had decreed her and Piero's death, proclaimed her to be the true and specially dear daughter of the Republic, *vera e particolar figliuola della republica*, and a brilliant Venetian mission attended her coronation. The Court of Rome could hardly afford to outrage morality by disapproving, or dare to quarrel with so important an ally as the Grand Duke. Florence was a flourishing State still, thanks to the encouragement given by Duke Cosimo to agriculture and the settlement of foreign merchants in Tuscany, and the duchy was therefore a financial power. Consequently Austria, if she felt any resentment, hid it, and Spain was not inclined to break with her still powerful adherent. Bianca was said to have ruined her health by taking drugs, for there was no legitimate heir born of the union, but Francesco did

GIOVANNA D'AUSTRIA, WIFE OF FRANCESCO I, AND SON

PAINTER UNKNOWN. UFFIZI

not love her the less for his disappointment, and Montaigne saw her, in her fading beauty, seated at the head of the table, and the Grand Duke below her. She was still handsome, with an agreeable, even inspiring face, and a full bust, well displayed. The shrewd, sceptical old humorist recognised in her a charm that might cajole a husband and secure the continuance of his devotion.

Nothing came of Tasso's adulation of Bianca. Antonio Costantini, secretary to Cesare d'Este, the husband of Virginia de' Medici, was quite willing to help his friend, but he was sagacious and cautious, as became a young courtier with his way to make. But nothing daunted Tasso; he possessed the strange insistence of the insane. Grillo was indefatigable. He worked on Vincenzo Gonzaga, and that young prince, who, however wild and uncontrolled, could be a good fellow enough at times, and always had an affection for letters, urged Alfonso to grant the poet some further measure of freedom than that of walking about the streets of Ferrara with an attendant. Alfonso gave an unwilling sanction. It was an *exeat* for a season only; he warned the Prince to "keep a strict watch, or urged by insane delusions, he will contrive to escape"; nay, he strongly advised Vincenzo to keep Tasso in hospital in any case, for he was always worse when allowed to wander. It is clear that the Duke was heartily sick of both Tasso and his importunate friends; but he was also unwilling to relinquish his hold on a man who still exhibited such flashes of genius and inspiration and brought such renown to Ferrara. The overjoyed poet vowed a pilgrimage to Madonna delle Grazie. His

one desire, to escape from Ferrara and breathe once more the free air of heaven, was accomplished. For his clothes, his manuscripts, his books, he had no care. He was like a wild bird released from a cage. He shook the dust of Sant' Anna from his feet, and set forth in the Prince's train, a free man at last, if only for a time (July, 1586).

CHAPTER XII

LAST YEARS

Voyage to Mantua—The "Torrismondo"—The Great Fair at Bergamo—Tasso's Flight from Mantua—Our Lady of Loreto—Sixtus V.—Plots to Kidnap Tasso—Naples and its Society—Sad Days at Rome—Monte Oliveto Maggiore—Medicean Legends—Domestic Tragedies—Duke Ferdinando de' Medici—Anecdote of Tasso—Last Wanderings—Matteo of Capua and his Cousin Laura—Marco Sciarra, the Brigand—The Brilliant Court of Clement VIII.—Last Days and Death of Torquato Tasso—Tasso Legends

THE gilded *Bucentoro* made its stately way up the river, the wild young Prince and his sprightly retinue aboard. Among them was Tasso. A gay, glittering group! but who knows what absurd paradoxes lurked in the fortunes of its members, what tragi-comedies, as ridiculous as cruel, the puppets played. The brave pageantry of life fleets on and its wake is a mocking gibe. The spare man with the scholar's stoop, prematurely aged at forty-two, was faring forth into the world once more, haunted by melancholy dread in what should have been his best years, bearing the memory of Sant' Anna, unable to stir abroad save in the company of a watchful attendant, without any settled provision, dependent on the charity of those whose protection was only to be purchased by flattery and submissiveness. It was well that he had been bred to the life of a courtier, better

that he tried to possess unshaken confidence in the purposes of God, best that his mental darkness was irradiated at times by the bright blaze of inward vision. There were times, even now, when he was "clothed with the heavens and crowned by the stars".

The first stopping place was Ostilia, full of sad reminders of his father's squalid ending. A dismal atmosphere still surrounded the poet, who remained under guard, though in the midst of that cheerful throng. In Sant' Anna the years of captivity reflected themselves in "Torrismondo," a tragedy he began there, and the work still occupied his attention. All is gathered up in its concluding lines:—

Ah, flowing tears! O piercing pain!
Life fleets apace: it crumbles in decay;
As ice, it melts away.
E'en mountains break, and scatter o'er the plain
Each shattered block.
The mightiest stock,
By conflict raised to glory, fades amain
As Spring before the sun. Fame's choicest bloom
Lies withered on the tomb.
Life speeds, as down a cliff the waters splash.
As a meteor's flight
Through the inky night,
As air, or smoke, or as the arrow's flash
Fleets human triumph, passes human power;
Fades as a helpless flower.
What look we for? what hope have we? what praise?
Of glory's proud scroll
What is left for the soul?
Sorrow and woe and black, lamenting days.
O youth and love and life, what is your gain?
But flowing tears, but piercing pain.

Tasso soon began to feel the want of the clothes, books and manuscripts that he had left behind him; and, above

everything else, he desired a portrait of his father. The Duke refused to send any of his belongings on: he wanted to retain his hold on Tasso. The Gonzaghi did all they could to divert him. Festivals were frequent at Mantua, as at every court. "We have had a fine Carnival," he writes, "and very beautiful and gracious ladies took part. Never was I more depressed at not being a happy, prosperous poet." Then comes a moment when youth is renewed. "If I should not be thought too light in loving over much, or if it were befitting to make choice afresh, I should have already made up my mind where to fix my thoughts." The great people and all the literati of the city paid court to their illustrious guest. But nothing diverted him from religious anxiety till Federigo Borromeo came to comfort his stricken soul. He was always more or less ill at Mantua. The flat lands around reeked with ague; and there were few worse places for it in all Lombardy. The least thing brought on a return of the old mental trouble. The results of the war of the pedants on the *Gerusalemme* began to be manifest. The poem worries him: it is not imbued with a spirit of austere piety, it is not an epic, he must sacrifice everything that is lovely to the rigid requirements of religion or theoretic pedantry. He has another bitter experience of the unfaithfulness of a trusted friend. Licino, a scholar of Bergamo, hurried on the printing of certain poems before Tasso had given them their final corrections, and, as usual, their author does not receive a penny from the sale. But, amid all these vexations, he contrives to finish "Torrismondo," and performs the pious office of preparing his father's "Floridante" for

publication. Then his mental state grows worse. "I spend my sleep night after night in dreams," he writes, "and the watches of the night are those of a sick man." He is in a state of complete mental irresolution, and when the Academy of the "Sleepers" at Genoa offer him 400 scudi a year, and more to follow, to lecture there on Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Ars Poetica*, he cannot make up his mind. Nor did he ever make a final decision, though the offer was frequently renewed.

He received strange gifts from his admirers. Literary cranks indulged their vanity by deluging him with singular epistles and still more wonderful poems. A sentimental member of the Bolognese Academy of the "Scarred Ones" sent him "The Crown of Steel and Poison," a work full of false feeling and misspent compassion for the fate of Ippolita Peperotti, a young Bolognese matron, of beauty and intelligence, who with the assistance of her lover, had poisoned her husband and suffered beheadal for the crime at the hands of the law. Tasso acknowledged the present in very courteous terms, but added his hope that the genius of the "Scarred Ones" might, on some future occasion, discover "some more agreeable subject for the exercise of so fine an intelligence".

Tasso became restless at Mantua; he wanted to go to Florence, to Ferrara again. He wrote a few hurried words to Prince Vincenzo saying that he was setting off with his portmanteau and would pay his duty at some better opportunity. He went to the Benedictine monastery of All Saints, but the Prince sent after him and had him brought back to Mantua. He had designed to start for Brescia the next day. With a view to improving his

health and preventing the attacks of maniacal anger which occasionally recurred, Tasso was at last permitted to proceed to Bergamo, where he would be among his own kith and kin. He arrived there in August, 1587, in time for the great fair.

Italy was the great market for its own rich productions of silks, cloths, weapons and works of art, and also the great exchange-market for the commodities of the Eastern shores of the Adriatic, merchandise from Venetian colonies and the products of Constantinople and the Levant. Merchants still vied with each other at the great fairs, displaying wares that had travelled from Asia Minor and Hindustan. Traders still flocked over Alpine passes to buy, and, at fair-time, the hilly streets of Bergamo, busy enough by day with a bartering crowd, were filled in the evening with a vast multitude of visitors that spread abroad to enjoy the cool air blowing down from the mountains; and, as twilight settled over the broad plain, there was the sound of minstrelsy and merrymaking in the little piazzas and along the lanes that led by the vineyards.

During Tasso's stay at Bergamo, Duke Guglielmo died, and Vincenzo ruled in his stead—a very different man, this dissipated, undisciplined prince from the stern, hardy men of his house, who, for six hundred years, had forced themselves into prominence by superiority in valour and statecraft, and for half that time had held absolute sway in Mantua; yet one who proved himself no such bad ruler as we might expect. Tasso returned at once to be present at the brilliant scene of the coronation and hymn it, and shortly afterwards he was granted permission to visit

Marco de Pii, the Lord of Sassuolo, a fief of Ferrara. Tasso had sung the birth of this young nobleman, and Marco had invited him, in all probability, because he was about to be married and wanted an epithalamium from his pen. But just as Tasso was going to start, he fell into the grip of his old enemy, malaria. His "head was all on fire," and he betook himself to San Benedetto and placed himself under the care of the kindly monks. He was hardly better when the Duke and Duchess of Ferrara came to Mantua on a visit of congratulation to the new sovereign.

Tasso took fright at the neighbourhood of Alfonso, for he had never ceased to intrigue for the favour of Rome or of the Medici. He fled, taking nothing with him except a valise that contained a few clothes; but he was accompanied by a faithful servant who refused to leave him. He made for Modena, the second city of the dominions of Duke Alfonso, and put up at the Duke's palace; but the very next day, abandoning his valise and his servant, he set out for Bologna where he had faithful friends. He determined to seek his fortunes at Rome, hoping great things from Pope Sixtus V., the man least likely of any to aid him. But first he had to fulfil certain vows that he had made to Our Lady of Loreto.

When the dispensations of the Almighty let Satan loose for a season, that evil spirit entered the black heart of Mahmoud; and the followers of that False Prophet, miscreant hordes of Arabia, came surging over the hills and valleys of the Holy Land like a flood released. They threatened with defilement the house where the Blessed Virgin had dwelt when she was visited by the angel Gabriel, bearing a marvellous message, and there she and

the Infant Christ had dwelt together. Angels of heaven came to the spot, charged to transport the holy house into safety. They bore it high in the heaven over isles that lie, close-scattered, like white water-lilies, on the waves, on to Tersato, in wild Dalmatia, and here, weary perchance of their burden, they deposited it. Here it rested for many years on a hill-top, and much did the men of those parts marvel; and much did they venerate the holy building. But, towards the end of the thirteenth century, the same invisible hands bore it once again westward and placed it in safety in a forest near Recanati. From time to time it was moved, either by messengers of God or of its own accord, until, finally, it found rest on a hill belonging to a noble châtelaine, named Laureta, or as some say, close to a laurel grove. The wonderful sight was beheld by two brothers who were outlaws and at enmity with one another. Amazed at the miracle, they turned their hearts to God, and cast down their weapons and departed in haste, spreading the news abroad. And thenceforward a multitude of people came to see the miracle that had taken place, and a city grew up round the sacred building. At the close of the fifteenth century Sixtus IV. pronounced in favour of the shrine. Julius II. issued a Bull that encouraged worship at Loreto, though this edict was marked by some caution. Though no one quite knew what evidence there was for the truth of the tradition, and, to sceptical observers, the house was built of material that bore a striking resemblance to Italian tiles, yet, to the pious pilgrim returned from Palestine, it was constructed of precisely the same reddish-grey rock that is to be seen near Nazareth.

Loreto stands, solitary and silent now, on an outspur of the Apennines, beyond Ancona, and in full view of the Adriatic and the flat lands that lie along its border. In the sixteenth century no sanctuary in Europe was so famous. The town that had grown up around it was strongly fortified, for, more than once of late years, it had been in danger of surprise from sea-roving Turks. Thousands of people came and went, and the city was plentifully provided with inns to receive them. All kinds of sufferers, the lame, the sick, the halt, the blind, flocked to Loreto then, as they flock to Lourdes to-day. A pilgrimage thither removed the reproach and disappointment of barrenness; it blunted weapons that might menace the life of the soldier; it was a certain antidote to the subtlest venom (and everybody in Italy had a dread of being poisoned). Penitents of all classes came in shoals; but having been shrived, they plunged into dissipation, and the streets of Loreto were as full of revelry as its fane was full of prayer. But, at the sound of the Ave Maria all vice was suspended in a trice. The pickpocket withdrew his pilfering hand, the leman leaped from her venal bed. Then having said the accustomed prayer the sinners resumed their interrupted employment.

The pilgrim passed along streets crowded with booths for the sale of votive candles and other offerings, jostling merchants and beggars and cripples and the lacqueys of princes on the way, and arrived before a vast church that enclosed the holy building. The genius of Giuliano da Majano and four generations of great architects had been employed, and the building was not yet entirely completed. It was embellished within and without with the

AN ANNUNCIATION AT LORETO

SANSOVINO, CASA SANTA, LORETO

work of famous painters, sculptors and workers in mosaic. In the centre of the church, underneath the great dome of Bramante, was the little Casa Santa, encased in marble that always shrank from contact with the actual brick, or that the builders were unwilling should touch such sacred material. In this chapel (for the holy Apostles had converted it into a house of prayer) stood a statue of cedar wood, four feet high, representing a black woman of no great comeliness, but it was assuredly the image of the Virgin herself, that St. Luke had made. The image and her "bambino" were decked in satins and velvets and brocades, studded with precious jewels; but close by, in a closet, was the veritable garment that Our Lady wore when she was alive. Seven huge silver lamps swung before the altar rail, beyond which was the house, plated with silver, and seventeen lamps of gold burned before the image of the Virgin, for this was the very spot where she had been wont to cook frugal meals for herself and her Son. The treasury was filled with the gifts of crowned heads—cameos and censors and chalices of gold, worked with wondrous skill and set with the most precious gems. Here, too, was the sacred cup of simple earthenware that the Holy Family used at meal-time, with their iron cooking-pot, and a most marvellous pearl that the chapel had brought with it, and, embedded in its soft luminosity the truly faithful and discerning eye might witness the very scene of the Annunciation. There was not an inch of space in the Casa Santa or the whole of the great building that enclosed it that was not adorned with precious things, and all the railings were crowded with ex-votos. The priests and officials waxed fat and gave themselves

airs, and received the richest gift as if they were conferring a priceless boon.

Tasso reached Loreto footsore and penniless. He had refused gifts that many friends and admirers would have thrust on him, for he was proud in no small measure; but now he was compelled to beg aid of one of the Gonzaghi who, by good hap, was in the city, and this nobleman and others gave him money, so that he was able to purchase and hang up his offering and depart on his way to Rome, intending to travel thence to Naples and Spain. For he was now resolved to leave no labour unaccomplished by which he might recover his heritage and become a man of independent means. This visit to Loreto refreshed him and inspired one of his finest devotional canzone.

Halting at Macerata, he found a brilliant circle that call themselves "The Fettered," and he held learned intercourse with them and the professors of what was then a splendid university. We are told that he appeared to them "to have become more erudite than he was before his infirmity, but completely wrapped in suspicion, and especially of the Duke of Ferrara". At the end of many stages he arrived at Rome, and took his faithful friend Scipione Gonzaga by surprise. Gonzaga, now raised to the dignity of Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave him refuge as before, but he had become a far more troublesome guest. He was filled, too, with notions of what the Pope might do for him.

Sixtus V., like Hildebrand, like Pius IV., like so many great Popes, had risen from a humble station to the Tiara by strength of intellect and force of character. His ancestors had been hardy mountaineers of Dalmatia; it was

said that his father had been expelled from Montalto for debt, and that his mother was the widow of a gardener. He achieved celebrity, first as a preacher, then as a university professor; he had been appointed Inquisitor-General at Venice, where his life was attempted, had taken part in the debates of the Council at Trent, and, a little later, received a Cardinal's hat. Finding that he was out of favour with the zealous but feeble Gregory XIII., he withdrew to the seclusion of his villa. It is said that he affected bad health, and that the expectation of his speedy demise was the cause of the agreement of equally powerful but opposed factions in the College of Cardinals to elect him. A poor lad comes to ascend the Papal Throne,

Et le pâtre de Montalte est le rival des rois.

If the Cardinals expected the accession of a frail, pliable sovereign, they were mistaken. Within two years he had nearly purged the Papal States of the marauders and brigands that infested them, and issued seventy-two Bulls for the reformation of monastic orders. His financial management was admirable, and he set the population to work, draining marshes and laying out farms. He rebuilt the Lateran Palace, finished the great dome of St. Peter's, started mills, endowed hospitals, set up obelisks, opened up streets, and enlarged churches. In a short time the population of the capital of Christendom became equal to that of Ferrara. His intelligence, if strong, was very narrow: he hated the relics of antiquity. He demolished the Septizonium of Severus, took down the urn that held the ashes of Trajan and the statue of Marcus Antoninus from the columns that bore them, and threatened to

destroy the tomb of Cæcilia Metella. Was this man, whose soul was moved to disgust by antique statues, the person who might be persuaded by the soft accents of the *Gerusalemme*, or affected by their spiritual significance as set forth in the allegorical appendix? Tasso's friends in Rome knew *him;* they also knew Sixtus V. Tasso tried in vain to get audience of the Pope. He was impracticable as ever; refusing to entertain the professorate at Genoa, which he was again urged to accept, writing letters to everybody, full of irritation and discontent, angering the Duke of Ferrara by repeated demands for his books, though he should have known, as another contemporary of Alfonso knew, how "the Duke makes a great profession of justice and mercy, but will only be supplicated with humility and submission". Tasso was an inconvenient visitor; and he became well-nigh an intolerable one, for his suspicions were directed against his best friends and all that gave him wise counsel. They were "busy inventing traps for him," he said; and, indeed, it was true. Costantini, now in Rome, was preparing to get him quietly off to Genoa. But Tasso refused to go to Genoa. Costantini got the Mantuan Court to order Tasso to return. Tasso refused to return: he "was no subject of the Duke of Mantua nor had he ever been in his paid service". Vincenzo wrote saying that he feared there would again be some wild flight or outbreak of madness and ordered that Tasso should be put into a carriage and brought back, *nolens volens*. Various plans to kidnap him were afoot, and the consent of the governor of Rome was sought, but, like everybody else, that gentleman stood in fear of the Pope. He consulted Sixtus and

CARDINAL PERETTI (SIXTUS V)

SASSOFERRATO. LATERAN GALLERY

his Sanctity replied that no violence or tricks ought to be used, for, in Rome, every one should feel that he dwelt in security.

Duke Alfonso had only lent Tasso to Duke Vincenzo. The former might hold the latter responsible for whatever Tasso did. Vincenzo put himself into communication with his brother-in-law. Now the possession of a poet that had become so famous was a great honour, but the possession of Tasso was also a great worry and a great responsibility. He had proved that he could be an extremely inconvenient person to have about a court, and especially a court that conceived the chief end of existence to be personal pleasure and the chief duty of the courtier to secure it. Moreover, the insanity of Tasso was now so patent at Rome that, though the Inquisition regarded Ferrara with sharp and searching eyes, it mattered little what strange fancies he might choose to confide to the Holy Office: there were others now, besides the Ferrarese and their local Inquisitor, who understood him. Duke Alfonso replied to Vincenzo that he had "no desire to keep that poor man in confinement any longer".

"Omnia Romae venalia" was said of the ancient city. Nor had Papal Rome improved much in this respect, even since the Council of Trent. It was a hot-bed of intriguing cardinals that thirsted for wealth and power. At first our poet found the city "beautiful and full of courtesy". Soon he discovered that the fourteen Princes of the Church with whom he corresponded were as ready as the Princes of the World to give praise, but far less inclined to offer provision.

Tasso had no provision: his oldest and much-tried friends remained loyal and did what they could for him, but he was very needy. "It is easy to be virtuous on a thousand a year," said Becky Sharp, and indeed nothing will test character so quickly and thoroughly as poverty. Poor Tasso was not only needy; he was perceptibly weakened, both in mind and body, by disease. He was wasted by continued ague, his mind was no longer so crowded with brilliant fancies, he was more irresolute, less proud, more anxious, more prone to lunatic anger and suspicion. But his character had undergone even worse deterioration. He is as desirous as ever of living like a gentleman, but readier to do so at the expense of other people. He is eager to take ecclesiastical orders with a view to rich preferment, hardly so willing to marry a fortune, "being too physically weak for matrimony and not that way inclined," he says. (He was, indeed, of less warm complexion than his poetry. Listen to his own confession: "I tried many ladies, and found the hearts of many soft to me, but I was hard. I never had a fixed affection, and my loves were always inconstant and fugitive.")

He took to writing begging letters, asking for ten times more than he really required. He tried every means to insinuate himself into Sixtus' good graces; he wrote uninspired verses in the praise of every one likely to be useful to him; he hoped to get money from the Bergamesque merchants in Rome. One of his friends advised him to try an alchemist and get base metals transmuted into gold! It is a sad spectacle, this slacking of genius, this advent of ignoble subterfuge, this slow degeneration of character. "He is ready," says Cherbuliez, "to sell

his wares at fixed prices—he wants so much for glowing laudation, so much to liken you to Hercules, so much for allowing you to figure among the courtly chivalric circle of the twentieth canto of the *Conquistata* that are worthy to be compared with the Titans themselves." He writes verses to great ladies to obtain childish luxuries. A silver bowl is absolutely necessary, for he has been "born a gentleman, not ill provided for, nor was my education that of the vulgar". He is glad to receive a pair of gloves. He holds it disgraceful for a poet to praise without payment in advance, "nor will I laud a prince under 100 scudi". Once and once only does his verse recover its old beauty. It is when Scipione Gonzaga is made a Cardinal. Then indeed, the lines ring out honest and true, for they came with a heart-beat.

The want of means, or at least of such means as would enable Tasso to gratify his somewhat extravagant whims, forced him to a desperate resolve. He was still proscribed from the Kingdom of Naples, but it was through no fault of his own. He had achieved European fame, and had the backing of powerful friends. He would betake himself to Naples and try to recover the maternal inheritance of which his relatives had defrauded Bernardo. Moreover, a change of scene to those bright, beautiful shores might restore to him some measure of health; he would see his sister once again and make the acquaintance of her second husband. He was in correspondence with Count Giambatista Manso, a Neapolitan admirer that he had never yet seen, and probably he was informed that if he took up his abode quietly in a monastery, he would not be interfered with.

So, in March, 1587, the good brethren of the Olivetan body, a branch of the Benedictine Order, that had many homes and much possessions throughout Italy, opened their hospitable doors to the poet. The visit commenced in gloom: Cornelia was dead.

Tasso found himself lodged in a beautiful place. The monastery was situated on the north side of a cliff of chalk and tufa, and, therefore, was cool; it was commodious, and the church was chiselled with many charming, tender fancies of Giovanni di Nola, Donatello and Benedetto da Majano. The buildings were almost hidden by screw-pines and cypresses; the ascent to them was crowded with olives and vines, and the gardens were full of red and white roses. Behind lay a narrow little glen, and at the bottom of the glen there danced the bubbling rivulet that had carved it out. Tasso began to improve, both in body and mind, in this peaceful retreat. He says the panorama spread before him was as medicine to his soul. And indeed it was the very place for his weary perturbed spirit. The chimes of vesper bells mingled with the distant hum of a great population, and there was the sterner music of plain-song, sung by deep, rich voices. Below, the whole city lay spread out like a map; feluccas rocked in the harbour and white lateen sails scudded across an incomparable bay. At night cowled forms flitted beneath the fir trees, and the muttered sounds of prayer broke the silence of a starry heaven, or, ever and anon, light strains of the lute were borne by some passing breeze from the thoughtless world below. And fire-flies danced intricate measures across the garden paths, and lights that were fastened to the stern of fisher-craft

glided through the distant darkness, bound some of them for Salerno and Sorrento, and recalling many memories, perhaps.

Tasso was very grateful to the Olivetan brotherhood that sheltered him, and began a poem, which, however, he never finished, describing how in the fourteenth century Gian Tolomei of Siena recovered his eyesight by prayer and became an anchorite and founded the Order. The fragment is full of visions of angels and flaming stairs that lead up to God.

The illustrious guest was visited by all the nobility of the city. For was he not "born of so noble a family; and had by his genius conferred much honour on the Kingdom"? The visitors proved to be no niggardly patrons. Among the most ardent admirers were Count Manso, a young man of twenty-seven, with whom Tasso had corresponded, but whom he now saw for the first time, and Matteo, Count of Paleno, the son of Giulio Cesare of Capua, Prince of Conca. Both of these gentlemen became warm, devoted friends to Tasso, for he still retained his winning personality, and the ingenuities of his diseased mind were singularly persuasive. They took him on excursions by land and sea; to the tombs of Virgil and Sannazaro, the grotto of Lucullus, the villa of Cicero, the slopes of Baiæ. In one of his innumerable letters to one of his innumerable friends we read: "I have returned to a city which, being my native place, ought to be the goal of my wanderings and the resting-place for my labours. To my happiness in Naples nothing is wanting, saving your presence and that of Father Angelo Grillo." But there was chastened sorrow, too, for Cornelia was dead,

and here also reposed the bones of his mother. His natural affection drew him to their grave-sides; and Tasso, like all of us when we have gathered even a few years to ourselves, was visited by memories of childhood, rendered painful and yet endurable by the memory of love. A letter tells of the visit to the tomb of Porzia, "of whom the recollection is ever dear, yet full of grief and the begetter of fresh sadness".

Soon the old restless discontent came back. There had been a period of elation; it was followed by depression: the ebb succeeded the flow. And this condition was not improved by his anxiety concerning his inheritance, most of which had passed by marriage into the hands of Camillo Rosso Caraccioli II., Prince of Avellino. Tasso secured the support of his life-long friend, the Duke of Urbino, and spared no effort to come by his own. Costantini, now a man of some influence at the Papal Court, got Sixtus V. to excommunicate those who withheld the mother's dowry, which, with interest, now amounted to a large sum. The edict was published by the Archbishop of Naples there, and also at Sorrento and Salerno; and Tasso began to hope that he might even recover his father's confiscated property. He put the matter into the hands of lawyers and added another real trouble to his imaginary ones. "To make a man perfect," he says, "three things are needed. They will sharpen his wits quite enough. They are an enterprise of love, an enemy, a lawsuit. Comacchio gave me the first" (does he refer to the *bruna ancella* of the Countess Scandiano?), "Ferrara the second, Naples the third." He submitted to medical treatment, but the Neapolitan physicians tried

copious blood-letting. No wonder that he grew worse in body and mind. All hope of a speedy termination to the lawsuit was abandoned. He resolved to return to his old friend Scipione Gonzaga at Rome.

As he drew near to that Antique Mother, he saw that her great dome was finished at last. It was a signal to the world that the Church had by no means resigned her Imperial right to rule or her privilege to shelter. Schism and rebellion only cause her to raise her head more proudly; she meets adversity with a more than regal mien. Tasso was struck by the sight, and saluted the city in a fine sonnet. Then he relapsed into his dejected state, quarrelling with everybody. One day, he rushed out of the Patriarch's house in a mad frenzy and took refuge with the monks of S. Maria Nuova, and, finally, was carried, very ill, a charity-patient, to the Hospital of the Bergameschi, which his immediate relatives had founded.

The sufferer was for ever accusing his well-tried friends of unkindness; for ever intriguing to get back to Ferrara or some other court. When his health improved he received an invitation to visit Florence from Ferdinando I., once a cardinal, who had succeeded to his brother Francesco I. Tasso had fished for this, and for many an invitation that he did not get. He set forth by way of Asciano, passing along the strange, sterile mud-heaps where Pope Pius II. tells us "my horse's hoofs sank deep into the earth, and he found it hard to pull them out again. The rains cut deep channels on either side, leaving narrow paths, difficult to keep; and, if you leave them ever so little, down you roll." But in the midst of this desert is an oasis, where lies the most ancient and

famous of Olivetan Houses, the convent that is so full of precious relics of Signorelli and Sodoma. Here our traveller found a pleasant resting-place, as did the good Pope before him. For here, says Pius, "are figs and almonds and many kinds of apples and pears, groves of cypresses, too, where you may take the air pleasantly of a summer's day, and walk in the shade of the vine-leaves. There are vegetable gardens, too, and pools for bathing, and a perennial spring; also tanks and wells, and groves of oak and juniper grow upon the rock itself. And a number of walks, wide enough for two abreast, wind about, or cut across the hill, bordered, on both sides, by vines and rose-trees and rosemary. These"—continues the man of the world become Pope, never so happy as when he was on some hillside of his native land—"these be pleasaunces delightful for the monks, but more delightful for those who, having seen, are free to go elsewhere." It is pleasant to think of Tasso coming to this quiet retreat to rest.

At last Tasso reached Florence. Not only Francesco, who had not "wanted a madman in his house," but his wife, Bianca, was dead. There is a curious legend attached to the circumstances of their end, a romantic story, worth telling, though it would not reach Tasso's ears, for it is a slightly later invention that found credence in other States, is preserved in State archives, and has been accepted by the gravest historians. It is one of the novels that professed to be history, and that were widely circulated in manuscript. They pandered to a depraved appetite for scandal, excitement, and the merely horrible, and proceeded out of the imaginations of indigent authors; but they were not unacceptable to petty potentates, who de-

lighted to hear ill of their rivals, and to all those who were interested in the misdoings of other people. Shortly after the death of Francesco and Bianca the imaginations of literary scoundrels furnished the world with yet another scandal to add to the vast pile of ignominy, deserved and undeserved, that attached to the House of the Medici.

Cardinal Ferdinando, so ran the story, was invited to a banquet by his brother, the Duke; and Bianca Capello made a tart for him, into which, unknown to her husband, she put poison. "I particularly want you to taste this tart," said the Duke to his brother. "It was made by Bianca's own hands." Now the Cardinal had a wonderful stone in his finger-ring, a stone that underwent strange change of colour on being brought near poison of any kind. Being suspicious of the fair Bianca, he contrived to apply the stone to the tart, and behold it became pale (should not this statement have given the judicious historian occasion to perpend?). So he refused to eat of the dish, making some excuse. But Francesco still pressed him to partake. "Since your own wife has had the grace to prepare it, will you not, then, be the first to taste?" asked the Cardinal. And Francesco did so, whereupon Bianca, beholding the fatal bite, and being unable to prevent it, ate of the dish also. But the Cardinal abstained. Then began the death-pangs, and the Cardinal, being eager to ascend the throne, took a pistol in each hand, and had the pair conveyed to their apartments, and saw to it that they were well guarded and that no medical aid might reach them. So there he watched their agonies until they were both dead. Then he bestowed a magnificent funeral on them; and it was whispered abroad that there

is no bane that hath not its antidote; and, indeed, before very long the Cardinal was released from his vows and became a powerful prince.

This delicious narrative is preserved in the Central State Archives. But an examination of Florentine records shows that the unhappy pair had, not long before their death, returned from the deadly Tuscan Maremma, where they contracted fatal fever.

There are plenty of these romances. Duke Cosimo I. was said to have married his son, Piero de' Medici, to Eleanora of Toledo, to hide his own intrigue with her. One of his sons, too, was reported to have died of fever, but Cosimo surmised that his brother had murdered him out of jealousy. So he took the suspected son with him to view the corpse. And blood flowed from the dead man when his murderer came in. This was conclusive; as conclusive as are blackened entrails of the action of poison. Thereupon Cosimo, observing that he had better be known to posterity as a just prince than as an unjust and partial father, first gave the wretch his pardon, and then slew him with his own hand, using the same dagger with which the youth had killed his brother. The real truth is that these lads also passed a summer in the Maremma and died of a fever contracted there.

Nonetheless, murder in high circles, and especially the murder of unfaithful or suspected wives and their lovers by jealous husbands, or of unchaste sisters by their brothers, was by no means uncommon. Paolo Giordano Orsini strangled Isabella de' Medici in her nuptial bed for the same reason that Othello murdered Desdemona. Piero de' Medici murdered his wife, Eleanora of Toledo,

FERDINANDO I, GRÂND DUKE OF TUSCANY

ANGELO BRONZINO. UFFIZI

for real or suspected adultery. We have seen the end of Ercole Contrari. The daughter of Guarini, co-courtier with Tasso and his friendly rival in verse, underwent the same fate. A year later than the period we have reached, Tasso composed two sonnets and a madrigal on a tragic occurrence that took place in the palace of his friend and admirer, Don Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa. Gesualdo surprised his wife with Don Fabrizio Carrafa, Duke of Andria, "in flagrante adulterio," and slew them both on the spot. Instances might be multiplied. They gave dramatic themes to our own writers, and have prejudiced us to take an unjustified and gloomy view of the state of society in the sixteenth century; for with all its faults, it was an advance on that of the Renascence. Nearly all the historic crimes of this period were committed from the combination of two powerful emotions, jealousy and pride of position; they were excused on the ground that Honour demands Her Sacrifice.

Tasso was received with marked distinction by the Grand Duke, "a man," says the Venetian ambassador, "of shrewd intellect, quick to grasp, and gifted with a penetrative insight into character; grave, gentle in diplomacy, affable in conversation, and able to adapt himself to his company; fond of pleasant talk, and, consequently, he is free with his servants". Ferdinando had been released from his vows and had married Cristina di Lorena. The Duchess had just presented her lord with an heir, and, of course, the event inspired Tasso's muse. The Grand Duke had promised him that he should not be molested by the literati, and so far from being insulted by the Della Cruscans he was fêted by all the learned of Florence and

its neighbourhood. The court, which rivalled Ferrara in sumptuous entertainment, was at its gayest. There was Don Giovanni Orsini there, a famous warrior who had distinguished himself against the rebels of the Low Countries; there was Don Antonio, a son of Bianca Capello; and Maria de' Medici, destined to become a French queen as the second wife of Henry of Navarre.

Tasso himself caught the prevailing air of gaiety. He intended to write a comedy to be performed on the occasion of the baptism of the little heir. Now there was a certain Bernardo Buontalenti staying in the city, who was to paint the scenery. One day, as Buontalenti stood at his doorway, a cavalier, who was passing, drew up, saluted him, and dismounted, saying, "Are you that famous Bernardo, at whose inventions all the world wonders, and especially at the marvellous apparatus designed for Tasso's Comedy?" "I am he," replied the painter, "but what you say of me is due rather to your courtesy." Whereupon, with a winning smile, the horseman threw his arms about the painter's neck and kissed his brow (Italian fashion), and said, "I am Torquato Tasso. Addio, my friend." And leaping on his horse he rode away before the astounded Bernardo could utter a word; nor did he ever see him again. For the summer heats affected the poet and he became very ill.

It was September, 1590. News came of the death of Sixtus V., and Tasso, even as had been the case with his father, turned his mind towards an ecclesiastical career. He started off for Rome and arrived at Scipione Gonzaga's weary and ill. He had maintained his position as a gentleman, spending his money recklessly and causing

generous friends to complain, not without cause. He hoped that the election would fall on his old friend and patron, Cardinal Albano, but Albano was passed over, so Tasso turned divided thoughts towards Naples and Mantua. His restlessness was worse than ever. Costantini, now secretary to the special envoy in the service of Duke Vicenzo, persuaded him to go back to Mantua. He went by way of Viterbo (where the bishop gave him lodgings), Siena and Bologna. He fell gravely ill at Mantua and tried to starve himself to death. The Duke and Duchess took every care of him; but he soon wearied of the court, and his gratitude was short-lived. He hurried off to Rome in the wake of the Duke, who had gone to pay his court to Innocent IX. on his accession, and was given house-room by his old friend of so many years, Maurizio Cataneo. Here he enjoyed the intercourse of the learned men of Rome, and especially of Spanish scholars residing there. Then, in 1592, he accepted an invitation which Manso procured for him: he went on a visit to Matteo of Capua, the Prince of Conca, escorted by two gentlemen.

Matteo, like all the other Italian feudatories of Spain, was a prince of high education. He had distinguished men in his suite; he cultivated literary society, and was visited by men of high rank and many distinguished ecclesiastics. His palace was a noble building; the chambers were hung with masterpieces of Raphael, Titian and Michelangelo; there was a large library of valuable books, and in the middle stood a statue of Antinous that had recently been dug up at Capua. The Prince had a wife, who was not ill-favoured, and for whom Tasso composed madrigals. But his heart was given to his

cousin, Laura Filomarino, a widow, by whom he had had an illegitimate son that the pair contrived to smuggle away to Vico Equense. The Prince employed Tasso to write verses for this lady, and was so eager in the matter that he would neither let the manuscript nor the author go out of sight. Tasso complained to Manso, who came one day and hauled him and the poems away with him to his own palace, the servant who was on guard not daring to interfere. And day after day the good Count took him a-sailing along the beautiful coast, or distracted him from brooding thoughts by hiring Neapolitan dancers, whom he loved to see. It was at Manso's house—the same Manso whom Milton visited and to whom he addressed a stately Latin poem—that Tasso finished the "Conquistata" and began "Il Mondo Creato," a poem of which the action ends at the point where that of "Paradise Lost" commences. Carlo Gesualdo, whom we have named as the doer of a tragic deed, was able to give Tasso the delight of much music, for a musical Academy met at his house. Madrigals of Tasso's invention were set by those of the Academy who composed; but he thought their music too soft and effeminate, though quite in the style fashionable at Ferrara and other courts. Probably his fine ear had learned to appreciate the nobler strains of Palestrina.

Tasso soon got restless again. He must go to Rome; and he induced Cinthio Passeri, the nephew of a new Pope, Clement VIII., to invite him. And perchance, though we do not know, among other motives that prompted the journey, he was not altogether sorry to escape from his *fidus Achates;* for Manso would seem to have dogged

his footsteps and hung on his words as Boswell did to Johnson. But Tasso left Manso a noble monument to friendship in the form of a dialogue that rings with sincerity.

The journey to Rome was arrested at Mola di Gaeta. An advance guard of Marco Sciarra, the brigand, had attacked an outlying village, and the little town was full of terror and confusion. The debased descendants of the condottieri had a bold and capable captain in Sciarra, who was a native of the wild mountains of Abruzzi. Exiles, escaped convicts, ruined farmers, discharged soldiers, and ruffians of every description, numbering at least a thousand men, were under his command. The Governments of Rome and Naples hurled troop after troop of soldiery against him, but always in vain. He had defied the law and the forces of the kingdom for nine years, and his audacity increased every day. Two years before, an army of four thousand men, horse and foot, fled before him; and so bold and skilful was he that the Venetian senate had sought his services and employed them in their war against the Uscocchi. He was practically monarch of a large area, and more powerful therein than His Holiness the Pope or His Majesty of Spain. He inspired terror and dread in every breast. A little later than this, his lieutenant, Piccolomini, a Tuscan exile, advanced right up to the gates of Rome, and there, in the spirit of the Middle Ages, when to mint money before the walls of a foe, or catapult a dead donkey over them, was considered the deadliest insult, he struck coin bearing the inscription "A Sacco Roma". At the moment when Tasso arrived at Gaeta, Sciarra lay on one side of the town and the united

Papal and Spanish troops were advancing on the other side, so that there was considerable danger of his being caught between two fires. But nothing happened, and a year later Sciarra was slain. Tasso wrote to Orazio Feltro, the jurisconsult that he had employed to conduct his lawsuit: "The other evening the whole country resounded with the wailings and shriekings of women, when the first assault was made on Castiglione. I was anxious to march forth and flesh the sword you gave me, but I was prevented." Poor Tasso, worn and weak—and vain! Does anything portray us with such irony of truth as the unconscious self-portraiture of our letters?

He reached Rome (May, 1592) without any further alarm from brigands, and was received by Cinzio Passeri the nephew of the Pope, who lodged him with himself, in the Vatican. The apartments of Cinzio were the rendezvous of all the literary men in Rome. Both he and Pietro Aldobrandini, another nephew of Clement, took a warm interest in Tasso's welfare; both supplied him with money, and the former provided him with a secretary who was no other than Angelo Ingegnari. But the old restlessness still vexed Tasso. He wanted to go to Spain, to return to Naples; above all, to get back to Ferrara—it was there he wished to lay his bones. Alfonso persistently refused to receive him. The signs of cerebral degeneration increase: moral decay as well as mental becomes very apparent. He removes all praise of the Estensi from the *Conquistata*, because he has not been paid for it, though he had received nothing but kindness and forbearance from that long-suffering House. He is overwhelmed with grief when Scipione Gongaza dies,

and resolves to erect an immortal monument to his memory; a paltry sonnet will not suffice, but he is equally eager to know what Scipione has left him, and, finding that he is not mentioned in the testament, we hear no more of the "monument".

It was clear that another catastrophe was imminent, so Tasso was sent back to Naples; where indeed it was well for him to be, if his health might allow him to attend to his lawsuit. But he grew daily feebler in strength at Naples, and kindly Cinzio, now become a Cardinal, urged him to come back to Rome. He arrived in November, 1594, "in safety," as he says in a letter, "but very infirm". Fever never left him.

He was again lodged at the Vatican by the Cardinals Cinzio Passeri and Pietro Aldobrandini in their own apartments. Here he was near to the great collection of books and manuscripts that Sixtus had collected and arranged in magnificent halls built for their reception. An afterglow of the Renascence clung about the Papal court. The nephews of Clement were ambitious to surround themselves with scholars and renew the patronage of learning. But the ancient fires had half burned out in the fierceness of their own flame, and then had come the Catholic Reaction to starve and quench them: the embers could not be revived. The cardinals made much of their guest; the learned praised him with one accord; there were voices raised here and there in Italy, demanding that Tasso should be invested with the laurel wreath of the poet, even as Petrarch had been crowned at Rome twelve generations before. Clement, a kindly man, with a turn for letters, was known to be inclining a favourable ear to a

proposition that was soon supported by well-nigh all Italy; he assigned a pension to the poet, gave him audience, and was very gracious to him; moreover, he consented to the coronation and the concession was confirmed by public acclamation. Never had Tasso received so much honour as now. The world was at his feet; the day was fixed for the coronation; the Prince of Avellino, the defendant in the lawsuit, agreed to a compromise, which together with the Pope's pension, made Tasso quite independent; fame and solid pudding had both arrived. As is usual, the public voice rang with a name when the man that had made it had become little less empty than its sound; pension and praise had come too late to be of profit; they reached one who was already conscious of the chill approach of death; who knew that now he was but the phantom of himself. The destined laureate, to whom painful memories of academical stabbings were perhaps more vivid than this noisy chorus of laudation, was, in spite of his innate unconquerable vanity, fully awake to the greater vanity of life. Did its irony pierce him as he heard

> The world applaud the hollow ghost
> That blamed the living man?

He was too ill to remain at the Vatican. One gloomy day in spring, when the rain was falling heavily, Cardinal Cinthio's chariot drove slowly up the slopes of the Janiculum. It stopped at the monastery of San Onofrio, and two servants helped a feeble, worn, prematurely aged man to descend. It was Tasso; the men were Cinthio's servants, who were sent by their master to wait on him at the monastery. The good brethren received him tenderly: he and they knew that he had come thither to die.

"What will my Antonio feel when he hears of the death of his Tasso?—the tidings, in my judgment, will soon arrive"—it is thus he writes to Costantini. "I have had myself conveyed to the monastery of San Onofrio, where I now am, not alone because the air is praised by physicians as the best in Rome, but because, on this eminence, and with the conversation of these devout fathers, I may begin my conversation in Heaven."

So there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast,
And then he thinks he knows
The hills wherein his life rose
And the sea where it goes.

It has been handed down that Tasso liked, during the few days that remained to him, to sit and muse under an oak-tree in the garden, and overlook the panorama of Rome. If he did so, his eye would range beyond the deep bed where slow, yellow Tiber flows, from the Palatine, the ancient abode of the Cæsars, to the newly-completed Temple of the Church. What mighty shadows, what stately pageants, what cruel spectacles of the pride and lust of life, what visitations from the deathless past must have crowded through the mind of the poet in those last days, what renewed recognition of the indomitable spirit of man and his nothingness! The first small beginnings of little promise; that early refuge of rude herdsmen and outlaws; the chequered commencements of conquest; the deadly struggles of the Republic; the march of unconquerable armies; the pride of the Imperial city; the brutal Roman holiday; the steadfast company of martyrs;

the final victory of the Cross; the peril from barbarian hosts; the strange eventful history of the descendants of the fisherman; the chequered life of the Christian Church; the vast array of mighty generals; the great procession of famous law-givers from Romulus to Sixtus; the long line of immortal poets from Nævius to himself!

In a few days Tasso became much worse. Cardinal Cinzio sent the Pope's physician to do what he could. There was another of the old outbursts of passion. He forbade his doctor to visit him; he had always been averse to drugs and he forced one of his servants, who importuned him to take medicine, to drink it himself; there would even seem to have been a return of mania for a while, but it passed away, leaving the body very weak, and Tasso composed himself to die. On the 24th of April he received the viaticum. Cardinal Cinzio came, bringing the papal benediction. On the 25th, having embraced the cross, he began to commend his soul to God, but the frail instrument of flesh was too worn and feeble, now, for him to complete the sentence. He was barely able to say, "In manus tuas, Domine," and then, slowly and quietly, he ceased to breathe. He had left little money: he had said that he wished part of it to go to the monks of San Gregorio for masses, and part, with his crucifix, to the brethren of San Onofrio; and he had directed that his epitaph should be "Hic jacet Torquatus Tassus".

Tasso lived fifty-one years—the years of Virgil. "He has paid his debt to Nature," wrote Guarini, when they bore him the news; "but it seems to me that it was but the termination of that death in life which only bore semblance of the vital spark."

TASSO'S OAK

The Romans were deprived of doing honour to themselves and the poet by a coronation. But the body, arrayed in splendid attire, was borne from the convent to the piazza in front of St. Peter's and back again, followed by the court of the Pope and the nobles and scholars of Rome. At night it was buried in the church of the convent. There were the customary laudations throughout Italy; orations, epitaphs and various outpourings of versifiers' souls. Cardinal Cinzio determined to raise a magnificent monument. But the memory of a friend, however cherished, is usually but a pale, fading spectre that soon quite vanishes in the blaze of successive suns; the remembrance of a voice once sweet and dear soon becomes lost to us in the blare and bustle of a busy world. So it was not until 1608 that Cardinal Bevilacqua, urged by the piety of Manso, raised the existing monument.

. . . . . .

"There are as many Tassos as Hamlets," wrote J. A. Symonds. The association of literary power and sane imagination with a degree of mental infirmity sufficient to need restraint, perplexed the world. The critics sought for the secret in Tasso's works, and they found there a fertile field for ingenious surmise. Tasso went mad for love of Leonora, said many; nay, Lucrezia was his *belle amie* said a few; that he only simulated madness was once the current creed; there had been compromising verses revealed by a faithless confidant, a kiss stolen from Leonora observed by the Duke, the compelled simulation of madness to save the scandal from becoming public entertainment, and protracted cruel punishment of

the hapless poet by Alfonso, who compelled him to wear this mask of insanity throughout life, to save the honour of his house!

Even in his own days there were wise shakings of the head and strange surmisings. In Italy, indeed, the truth was well known. Tasso himself acknowledged that "there have been many occasions when I have not been lord of myself"; "I am not well, and so melancholy that I am reputed mad, and I believe it"; "my infirmity is due to stuffing myself with too sweet intellectual food in my youth, mistaking condiment for nutriment". At Ferrara, when any one behaved foolishly, men said they were "falling into the ways of Tasso". There is no end of contemporary evidence proving his mental condition. His letters are full of unsoundness to a discerning mind. Bartolommeo Bertazzuoli, a learned jurisconsult, alluded, in 1583, to Tasso's madness as being due to overstudy. De Thou, who had known Tasso in 1574, remarked, in his history of his own times, on the clearness of his intellect in the intervals of insanity, and how he got attacks of stupor and mania. Battista della Porta, who was with Tasso in the service of Cardinal Luigi, and who, therefore, knew him in his youth, wrote a work on physiognomy, published in 1586, in which he speaks of the poet's humid and upturned eye; "Est et Veneri et mentis alienationi obnoxius". But Tasso, like many insane people, tried to disguise the infirmity of which he was half-conscious; he did so with subtle ingenuity and was never at a loss to make out a plausible case for himself. His letters, like those of all scholars of the period, were not solely directed to the eye of their immediate recipient; they were widely

circulated, and, when they were printed, the world accepted his statement that he had been harshly dealt with.

Across the Alps the strange juxtaposition of genius and insanity got coupled with the traditional methods of Italian rulers, and a myth arose. One Bartolommeo del Bene, an Italian, settled at the Court of Henry III. of France, wrote verses addressed to Tasso in which he likened him to Icarus, who fell through too bold a flight—his ardent love will immortalise the River Po as intrepid Icarus did the sea. There was quite enough to be found in the *Gerusalemme*, the *Aminta* and various canzone to support a romantic theory of how Tasso loved a lady of high degree, and how this had driven him mad. The legend crossed the mountains to Italy, and, early in the next century, when the true facts of the case were beginning to be forgotten, Count Manso wrote his famous biography. *Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*

No one ever considered Cromwell, the great Protector, handsome; and, though he was a Puritan, it may have been a species of concealed vanity that made him lay stress on the small disfigurements of his visage; he is said to have insisted on his limner reproducing even the wart on his nose. Tasso was very far from being a Cromwell; he was no Puritanical stickler for literal truth; he was a child of the Renascence born out of his due time, preferring fair imaginations to exact statements; he was undoubtedly a vain man, and it would probably have satisfied him to know that Manso was to be his biographer. Could there exist so great a man as to be nobly and absolutely impartial, even to himself; could he excel Cromwell, if not in temper, then in power, he

would rule that a simple, naked, but complete statement of facts, and all papers, and nothing else, should be published after his decease. Biography is the least veridical branch of history, and friends and relations make the worst of biographers. The latter are too partial; they are always disingenuous: the former are apt to paint the dead friend, not as he was, but as they would have him to be; or they injure his memory in an honest but misjudged effort to be completely candid; they either conceal or magnify the excrescences. Both friends and relations may even endeavour, by exalting the subject of their memoir, to elevate themselves. Manso was a friend; he approached his task, perhaps, not wholly unaffected by this latter motive; certainly in the spirit of an historical novelist with a small regard for actual fact. The hero of his story cannot be made too splendid; his genius and the power it exercised cannot be magnified too much. Manso cast the light of his own temperament on the naked truth and endeavoured to endow it with artificial grace. He was glad to embellish his book with the growing legend. He is obliged to admit the insanity of his friend and hero; but he is careful to say, in his ninth chapter, that the poet loved above his condition and dissimulated to keep the object of his flame unknown. He speaks of Tasso as the modern Ovid, insinuates where he ought to speak out, and quotes a line as Tasso's which was written by Guarini—

E di sì degno cor tuo stra *le onora.*

By-and-by we have traditions of jealous princesses, both of them in love with Tasso, *et id genus omne.* Surely, thought sober folk, if we cannot actually perceive the fire,

so much smoke must indicate the direction where it lies! And so men wasted their brains in extracting illusions out of the thirty-three volumes of the *Opere di Tasso*. At last came those possessed of an industry not less untiring, but furnished with more scientific sagacity, and supplied with a better opportunity of getting at the truth. Campori and Solerti and others searched for objective evidence. Solerti devoted no small span of life to the work. They ransacked great mounds of ancient papers; they perused them with indefatigable labour, they extracted the facts with penetrative acumen. The dusty memorials of the dead revealed their secrets; relics that malevolent time had hidden were brought to the light of day. No new Goethe can now make Tasso's passion the theme of a romantic drama; no new Byron may reproduce it in a musical wail; for it never was. But a nearer approach to the truth reveals, perchance, a life not less full of pathos, an affliction not less worthy of our compassion.

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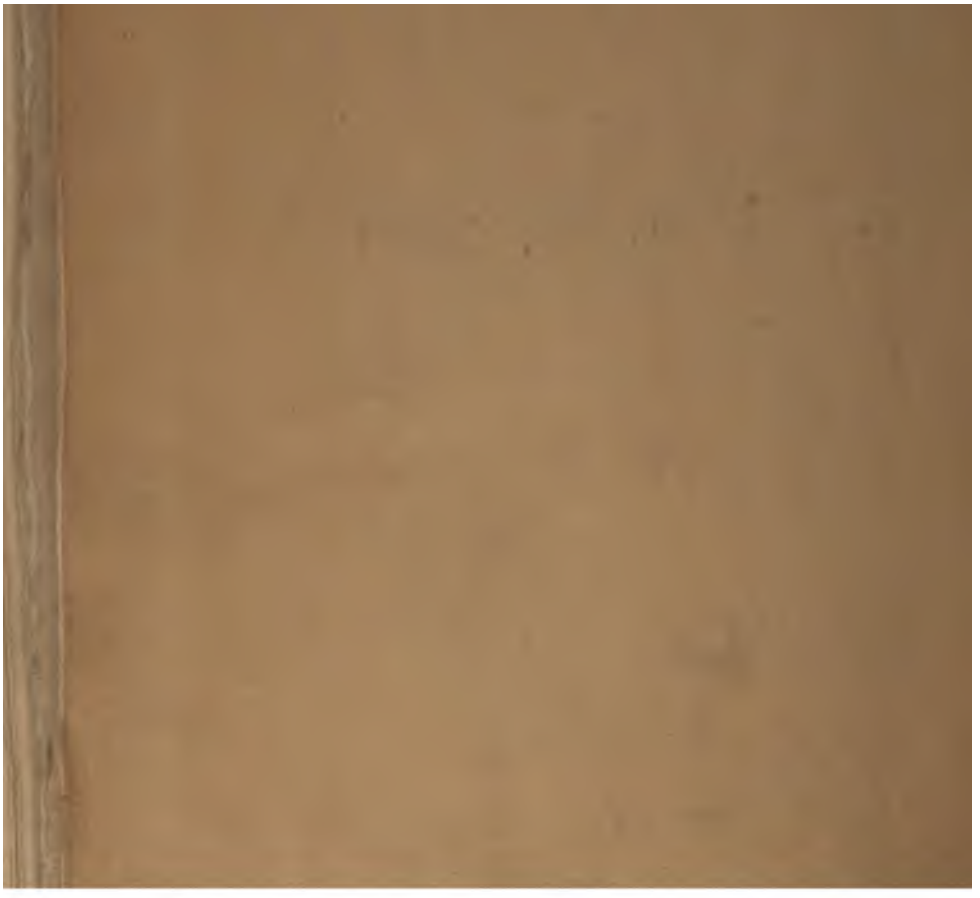

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